

KITCHEN SINKS AND DRAMA

Juliet Stevenson on family life, acting and idealism, P19



BEST FOR BOOKS

Matthew Parris on the man behind Tony Blair's smile
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ENGLAND EXPECTS

Hoddle's no parties, no women regime for players, PAGE 48



BEST FOR JOBS

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Labour unlikely to join single currency in 1999

By PHILIP WEBSTER
POLITICAL EDITOR

THE Labour leadership is edging towards a decision to stay out of the first wave of a European single currency if it goes ahead in 1999. The party's most influential figures are privately voicing serious doubts over whether a Labour government coming to power next year would want to make such a momentous move so soon after entering office.

Labour is committed to seeking the country's approval of a single currency either through a referendum or a general election, but opinion is hardening at the top of the party for that test to be delayed

possibly until the general election after next. Gordon Brown, the Shadow Chancellor, appears to be the only senior figure to believe that the manifesto for the coming election should be so explicit as to give a mandate for entry without a referendum.

Both Tony Blair and Robin Cook, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, favour retaining the present ambiguous stance which would mean that an election victory next year could not be seen as authorising entry. And senior Shadow Cabinet figures view the prospect of a referendum campaign in the early months of a Blair government with horror because of the heavy weight of constitutional and other legisla-

tion it is committed to introducing. Were Mr Blair to want to take Britain into the first wave, he would have to make that plain by next autumn when he would have to promise legislation to make the Bank of England independent. But party leaders believe that a new government would not want to take such a controversial decision so soon.

Mr Cook is understood to favour delaying a decision so that Britain can see how the first wave of a single currency develops before coming to a conclusion. Senior figures believe that Britain's partners would not regard such an approach as anti-European, and that they would under-

stand that after being out of power for 18 years, Labour was just not ready to make up its mind. Mr Blair is reported by close confidants to have strengthened his view that the coming election will not be sufficient to test the public's view and that there will have to be a referendum or a delay to a second election. But Mr Brown — perhaps the strongest single currency advocate in the leadership — shares Kenneth Clarke's reservations about a referendum, fearing that a lengthy campaign might unsettle the markets and damage the economy. Colleagues say that he might prefer to test of opinion at a second election.

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Castle's pension plan is defeated

Tony Blair beat off his only serious challenge of Labour's conference week last night when delegates threw out Baroness Castle's demand for a £3.5 billion package to increase the income of all pensioners. Page 11

stand that after being out of power for 18 years, Labour was just not ready to make up its mind. Mr Blair is reported by close confidants to have strengthened his view that the coming election will

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The leadership backed a surprisingly sceptical motion in this week's debate at the Labour conference in Blackpool. It called for job levels to be included in the Maas-tricht criteria for qualification to a single currency, which some

sceptics Britain would be unable to achieve. Mr Cook told delegates: "Jobs will be the bottom line by which we judge whether Britain will join a single currency. The single market would work better with a single currency. But Britain will only benefit if we can compete on level terms."

Peter Riddell, page 11
Leading article, page 21

Multiple birth woman loses all her babies

By ADRIAN LEE AND CAROL MIDGLEY

MANDY ALLWOOD was said to be devastated last night after losing her remaining five babies and the dream of becoming the first woman to give birth to octuplets.

Miss Allwood, whose pregnancy sparked an ethical debate over fertility treatment, selective abortion and chequebook journalism, had been told on Monday that it would be a miracle if any of the babies were to survive.

Three boys had been miscarried that night and yesterday morning a girl was stillborn during an examination that took place under anaesthetic at King's College Hospital, London. Doctors then said that the remaining four foetuses were further up the womb and still moving, but Miss Allwood started to have contractions and at 5.30 pm it was announced that they had all miscarried.



Mandy Allwood was said to be devastated at the loss of her last five foetuses yesterday

The medical team had earlier stopped treating her with a drug to halt her contractions and she had been given a blood transfusion as a precautionary measure. That stabilised her condition and the doctors were surprised by the how quickly the end came. Her boyfriend, Paul Hudson, the obstetrician Donald Gibb and the gynaecologist Professor Kypros Nicolaides were with her when the last four babies miscarried.

Miss Allwood, who rejected medical advice to abort some of the foetuses to give the

others a chance of life, had been in the 19th week of her pregnancy. She had hoped to carry them until the 24th week, when they might have been able to survive.

Mid-East alert as Washington talks break up

FROM MARTIN FLETCHER IN WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT Clinton's emergency Middle East summit broke up yesterday without any resolution of the highly-emotive issues dividing the Israelis and Palestinians.

Mr Clinton said that talks would resume in Israel on Sunday, but the summit's failure to achieve tangible breakthroughs means there is a danger the West Bank and Gaza could erupt in violence greater than that which left 76 people dead last week.

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£500 windfall for investors

An average £500 of shares is expected to go to 3 million investors with the Norwich Union when the company floats on the stock market next year. Norwich is the first of the mutually-owned life insurance companies to float. Page 25

Scots spurn give-away 'millions'

By SHIRLEY ENGLISH

A MYSTERY Englishman claiming to be a millionaire lottery winner has been astonishing people in Inverness by trying to give his money away.



Foster: astonished to be handed wads of £50 notes

The fast-talking Londoner, with tattooed arms, who calls himself both Kevin and Stevie-boy, has been producing wads of notes in bars, carparks and taxis. He claims to have won a £7 million jackpot.

Yesterday surprised regulars in the bar of the Gellions Hotel in Bridge Street were treated to numerous rounds of drinks at the expense of the stranger. Alan Fraser said: "Every time anyone went to order a round the man produced a tenner or a twenty pound note to pay for it. It was astonishing."

The man surfaced on Tuesday afternoon, exactly a week after his first visit to the area, when he had given stunned Inverness taxi driver George

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Hogg jostled by farmers at dairy show

By MICHAEL HORNSBY, AGRICULTURE CORRESPONDENT

DOUGLAS HOGG, the Agriculture Minister, was jostled and jeered by 500 farmers at a dairy show yesterday in a demonstration of anger at the Government's handling of the "mad cow" disease.

Police and stewards had to surround Mr Hogg to prevent him from being manhandled as placard-waving farmers surged forward chanting "Hoggy, Hoggy, out, out, out". One witness said: "I do not know what they would have done if they had got hold of him."

Mr Hogg was guest of honour at the South West Dairy Show at the Royal Bath and West Showground at Shepton Mallet, Somerset. Some farmers could not get into a packed meeting he held with members of the National Farmers' Union and the Country Landowners' Association.

Anthony Gibson, the NFU's regional director, said: "I could see the mood was turning nasty and I suggested to Mr Hogg that he should go out on the balcony of the auditorium and speak to the farmers outside. But he refused to do so and this made matters worse."

Mr Hogg, looking shaken, was led to the main ring to present cattle prizes as farmers crowded round him. He left the ground 15 minutes later.

Feelings are running high after a decision last week by the Government's request, to cut 10 per cent from the compensation paid to farmers for culled cattle. There is discontent among farmers over the high number of old cattle still awaiting slaughter under the cull scheme set up after fears emerged that the human disease CJD was linked to BSE.

Feeling that the Government's request, to cut 10 per cent from the compensation paid to farmers for culled cattle, was a "disgrace", Mr Hogg was surrounded by a group of farmers who were chanting "Hoggy, Hoggy, out, out, out".

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Have-a-go granny bashes muggers who stole pension

Have-a-go gran Barbara Castle, 85, on a seaside holiday at the Winter Gardens, Blackpool, yesterday, protested: "I'm just a simple Yorkshire girl." Castle, suspecting two other holidaymakers, Gordon Brown and Harriet Harman, of stealing from her pension scheme, had attempted to mug the entire leadership of the Labour Party. "Barbara meant well," was the whisper among party managers at the Imperial Hotel last night. "She was just confused."

Baroness Castle of Blackburn, in scarlet, looked anything but confused, anything but simple and pretty mature for a girl, as she took the microphone that afternoon. Nobody knows better how to work a crowd and this wily survivor of Harold Wilson's Cabinets was milking her advantage at Blackpool for all it was worth.

As the debate started, Lady Castle was seated at the front, under the noses of the platform party and cool as a cucumber. In a ring around her were the nation's press photographers, sitting on the floor, snapping the variety of serene, defiant or thoughtful poses with which she entertained us. One moment it was head rested philosophically on chin; the next, chin up and eyes flashing; then she would study her notes.

She listened impassively as a series of speakers praised her. "Barbara Castle's done brilliant," said Bolsover delegate Elton Watts, in broad Derbyshire. The Cockney accents of Dave Lawrence, from Poplar and Canning Town, were raised in her cause. And there was no mistaking the

MATTHEW PARRIS
POLITICAL SKETCH



Lady Castle yesterday: triggered applause skilfully

obligatory dark two-piece suit and bright silk tie, began his speech in a neutral BBC voice, you knew he would be supporting new Labour. From the platform, Ms Harman, in a pink suit squared with those graph-paper lines that warn enemies against messing with her statistics, watched with

the remarkable calm which she has shown through a turbulent year. They called Lady Castle to speak. Everyone rose in applause as this tiny, birdlike figure in an improbable wig climbed the white stairs to the lectern.

She spoke well, adopting her usual informal "Oh — and another thing...". Style Opinion divides as to whether this was a well-meaning little old lady speaking from the heart or a ruthless street-fighter using audience appeal to maximum advantage.

Perhaps she is both. Declaring that "a good debate strengthens democracy" and delivering a calculated kick at Mr Brown's shins, she stabbed the lectern, called Ms Harman "dear", triggered applause skilfully, then protested that the applause was robbing her of speaking time — which drew more applause, as she intended. In fact, nobody was trying to silence her.

Her descent from the platform, to another standing ovation, was masterful. Lady Castle is perfectly well able to walk down stairs — I've watched her often — but on this occasion she hesitated, offered a frail elbow to a young chap who ran up to help, then descended ever so carefully, as if a little in fear.

Waiting below to offer her his arm was her adversary, Peter Mandelson. Old pro meets young pro. Wags joked that she'd better watch out in case his embrace concealed a knife. But I reflected that were it not for the cameras, Mandelson would have been well advised to guard his groin from an elderly, but still sharp, knee.

Individuals to get Lottery awards

More than 3,000 people will share £20 million in National Lottery grants after the Millennium Commission announced it will be making awards to individuals. Awards from £1,000 to £10,000 will be given to people who work on projects in their local community. Six charities have been chosen to be "award partners" with the commission to decide where to allocate the first block of grants totalling £8.6 million: Help the Aged, Raleigh International Trust, Farmington Institute for Christian Studies, Royal Society for the Advancement of Science, Technquest and Earthwatch Europe.

Terrorist suspect buried today

The suspected IRA terrorist, Diarmuid O'Neill, who was shot dead by police in London ten days, will be buried today in west Cork near his parents' retirement home in Timoleague. Senior IRA members are expected to attend and Irish police say they have contingency plans to deal with disturbances.

Mortars found at IRA bunker

Irish police uncovered 21 mortar tubes in an underground IRA bunker in Co Louth close to the border with Northern Ireland. Eight mortar frames were also found. In New York police seized a cache of guns they believe may have been destined for the IRA. Two Irish Americans face charges.

Britain host to Commonwealth

Britain is to host the next Commonwealth heads of government meeting for the first time in 20 years. It was confirmed yesterday. Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, said the Government was "delighted" that the meeting would be in Edinburgh next year, from October 24 to 27.

Boy admits killing tramp in park

A boy aged 14 admitted killing a tramp by setting fire to him as he lay on a park bench in Eastleigh, Hampshire. The boy, appearing at Winchester Crown Court, denied murdering Alan White, 50, but admitted manslaughter. He was remanded to secure accommodation for a psychiatric report.

Father denies mass murder

Khalid Mahmood, 36, a father of six who is alleged to have killed his three daughters with a knife in Bristol and then travelled to Birmingham to kill his estranged wife, Imtiaz Begum, 37, and her son, 2, pleads not guilty to murder but admits manslaughter because of diminished responsibility.

Rare snails saved with porridge

A species of rare snails has been saved from extinction with the help of porridge. Scientists at Nottingham University had earlier tried several foods on the tropical patella snails without success. Numbers of the snails, which are fed twice daily on the oats, are now increasing rapidly.

Eel slaughter investigation

The annual slaughter of sandeels in Scottish waters by Danish fishermen, which it is claimed results in the destruction of fishing stocks, is to be investigated by marine experts from the Natural Environment Research Council based at St Andrews University, among others.

Champion's baby arrived on cue

The world champion snooker player Stephen Hendry became a father yesterday when his wife Mandy gave birth to a boy, Blaine Thomas, was born at an unnamed Scottish hospital at 9.15am, weighing 6lbs 9oz. The couple, who live in Glenageary, married in June last year.

Troubled spy plane should now land in one piece

By MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

A BRITISH defence company explained yesterday why the unmanned spy plane, it has just sold to the Ministry of Defence for £250 million still suffers breakages on landing.

The Phoenix unmanned air vehicle that will spy on enemy battlefields from about 8,000ft has had a history of disastrous crash landings during the 11 years of development. This week the Ministry announced it would buy the Phoenix from

GEC-Marconi Avionics because the company appeared to have solved the problem by fitting an airbag to absorb the impact of landing.

Phoenix, with a large pod underneath fitted with thermal imaging systems, has to flip over on to its back before landing by parachute. Saul Lanyado, managing director of GEC-Marconi Avionics, said that the fin tips and on some occasions, the tail tips,



The problematic Phoenix unmanned spy air vehicle

would still break off on landing. But they could be replaced cheaply, he said. The combination of airbag

and parachute for Phoenix had been made necessary, Dr Lanyado said, because of the Ministry's insistence that a

remotely-piloted vehicle should be able to land on any surface and without any help from ground staff. There was to be no runway or ground netting to catch the aircraft.

The company, which now hopes to bring Phoenix into service by 1998, nine years late, originally designed the aircraft with a collapsible foam "hump". But the G-force of the landing still caused "unacceptable" damage.

Now, an airbag starts to come out as Phoenix falls to

the ground in a nose-dive before flipping over.

Britain's managing director of GEC-Marconi Aerospace Systems which is now managing the Phoenix project, said that after millions of pounds of extra funding had been provided by the company, all the remaining problems had been resolved.

Phoenix takes off by being catapulted off the back of a 14 tonne lorry and its flight is monitored by a three-man ground crew.

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THE TIMES THURSDAY OCTOBER 3 1996

Lorry driver gave away French student's champagne as gifts, court is told

Killer 'drove for 10 days with girl's body in his cab'

By RICHARD DUCE

A LORRY driver travelled the country for ten days with the body of the French student Celine Figard in the back of his cab after she was raped, beaten and strangled, a court was told yesterday.

David Farrer, QC, for the prosecution, said that Stuart Morgan, 37, had murdered Mlle Figard, 19, as an act of "uncalculated and unmitigated wickedness". He told Worcester Crown Court that Mlle Figard, a "bright and retiring girl", was murdered after she accepted a lift from Mr Morgan at Chieveley service station beside the M4 near Newbury, Berkshire. She was making her way to Hampshire to spend Christmas with a relative.

Mr Farrer said that for ten days Mr Morgan had concealed her body on the lower bunk inside the cab of his Mercedes lorry. It was parked outside his home in Poole while he celebrated Christmas with his wife and young son.

Mlle Figard's naked body was dumped in a lay-by near Worcester on December 28 or 29, allegedly at about the time Mr Morgan, a self-employed driver, travelled from the South Coast to deliver goods in Shropshire.

Mr Farrer told the jury that there was an overwhelming case of circumstantial evidence against Mr Morgan that would lead them to the

conclusion that he alone was responsible for killing Mlle Figard, an accountancy student from the Haute-Saône region.

After his arrest, police carried out DNA tests in his cab where three spots matched Mlle Figard's blood group. A search of his garage uncovered a blood-stained mattress from the cab. "It was soaked with blood and still damp two months later," Mr Farrer said. Some of her possessions were also found at the house.

Items of the student's clothing were recovered near a warehouse at High Ercall, near Telford, Shropshire, Mr Morgan's destination late last December along a route that would have passed close to the lay-by on the A449 road where her body was found.

It was also alleged that Mr Morgan tried to tamper with tachograph records of his lorry to conceal his detour to the lay-by. Mr Farrer said that at one stage Mr Morgan had probably planned to dismember and bury his victim. On a trip to Cornwall he bought a spade, hacksaw, and hand axe.

Mr Farrer told the jury: "We say that he raped her and killed her in the cab of his lorry in the late afternoon or early evening of December 19



Bernard and Martine Figard, parents of the murdered student, arriving at Worcester Crown Court yesterday

within quite a short time of picking her up from Chieveley service area. We say that he kept her body behind the driving seat of his lorry for very nearly ten days over the whole Christmas period. During that time, he drove considerable distances with the body lying behind him. He showed a very cool head indeed."

As the trial began yesterday Mlle Figard's parents, Bernard and Martine, were in court. They have been provided with headphones and a translator to explain proceedings.

Mr Farrer said Mlle Figard set off from her home on December 18. Rather than have her hitch-hike, her par-

ents had arranged a lift with a friend through the Channel Tunnel. She wanted to visit Britain to improve her English. She had worked the previous summer as a waitress at the Ashbourne Hotel in Fordingbridge, Hampshire, where her cousin was a trainee manager.

"She evidently enjoyed being in this country and it did her English a great deal of good," Mr Farrer said.

Along the way the French driver stopped at a vineyard where Mlle Figard was given two bottles of champagne. The same two bottles, it was alleged, that Mr Morgan gave away as Christmas presents. Mlle Figard and the friend

slept in the cab of the lorry at the Channel port and the next day went through the tunnel to England, where they met Roger Bouvier, a French lorry driver who was going closer to the hotel. Mlle Figard agreed to travel with Mr Bouvier and at about 4pm on December 19 he dropped her at Chieveley service area. Shortly afterwards, Mr Farrer said, Mlle Figard found another lift in a white Mercedes lorry.

"That was the last time that anybody saw Celine alive," Mr Farrer said.

After widespread publicity about the student's disappearance, Mr Morgan shaved off his beard, it was alleged. A police description said the

suspect was bearded. Mr Farrer said Mr Morgan accepted that he took Mlle Figard on the final leg of her journey from Chieveley. He admitted he had sexual intercourse with her but claimed it was with her consent. He maintained there was no question of rape and that after a brief sexual encounter he had dropped her off safe and sound early on the evening of December 19. That was shortly before he arrived with his lorry to unload at the Southampton container terminal.

Mr Morgan denies murdering Mlle Figard between December 18 and 30 last year. The case continues.

Princess 'pledged to destroy husband'

By ALAN HAMILTON

DIANA, Princess of Wales told her husband during their lengthy wrangle over divorce that she would do her utmost to make sure that he never became king, a new royal biography claims.

In a tantalising glimpse into the Princess's state of mind after her separation from the Prince of Wales in 1992, the author Ben Pimlott says that according to a friend of the Princess, she told him: "You will never be king. I shall destroy you." A footnote merely ascribes the quote to a "confidential interview". The words appear in Professor Pimlott's biography of the Queen, published today to mark her seventieth birthday.

Professor Pimlott, a left-of-centre historian of the Labour Party, teaches politics and contemporary history at Birkbeck College, London. He has published studies of Hugh Dalton, for which he won the Whitbread Prize, and Harold Wilson.

His disclosure comes in a passage on the Princess's face-to-face interview for *Panorama* last November, watched by a record British television audience of 23 million. During the interview, the Princess gave a hint of her attitude towards her husband when she said that he might not be a suitable candidate to succeed to the throne, and that Prince William could well be the more desirable alternative.

Professor Pimlott is scathing about the Princess's television performance. It was, the author suggests, not up to the BBC's usual standards. "Delighted with its prize, the BBC abandoned any pretence at objectivity, restricting the interview to the gentlest of questions, and retaking shots indefatigably to produce a fluent, and undeniably engrossing, package."

There is no evidence that the Princess has succeeded in her destructive intent. The divorce, finalised in August after 3½ years of negotiations, has cost the Prince a reported £15 million, but he continues his public life as though nothing has happened.

The Queen: A Biography of Elizabeth II, by Ben Pimlott (HarperCollins: £20)



Morgan admitted giving Mlle Figard a lift and having intercourse with her but denies killing her

Funfair boy killed through gross neglect, inquest jury decides

By TIM JONES

A BOY who died on a fairground ride was unlawfully killed through gross neglect, an inquest jury said yesterday. Tim Morgan, 9, suffered head wounds after a water-chute carriage smashed into a metal arch carrying fairy lights.

The 60-year-old ride had been given a safety certificate two days previously. The coroner, Philip Walters, criticised the owner of Coney Beach funfair at Porthcawl, Mid Glamorgan, for his "mishmash"

maintenance of the 40p attraction. The owner, Pat Evans, 73, has already been fined £7,500 with £3,500 costs after prosecution by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr Justice Curtis said then at Cardiff Crown Court: "Some might think that as there has been a death, a more severe penalty should be imposed. A manslaughter charge was considered, and rejected by the prosecuting authority."

Yesterday Mr Walters said of maintenance at the funfair: "There were no written instructions on a

daily basis. It was a situation which was a mishmash. There was no system of proper work procedures when this tragedy occurred."

The inquest jury was told that an independent inspector, Richard Cousins, had failed to notice that two bolts meant to hold the arch in place were missing because holes had not been drilled. Mr Cousins, 61, who works for LEA Inspection Services of Swansea, said he believed that he had complied with government regulations.

He said that he had made three

inspections of the ride in the five weeks before the accident and had walked the length of the chute. He knew the arches were safe because he could not move them. "I shook them to see if they were loose. I thought that was enough." On the ride's safety certificate, Mr Cousins wrote: "It is in a condition where it will not present a danger to the public."

Michael Fahey, a Health and Safety Executive inspector, told the inquest that an electrician who fitted lights to the arch should have been

aware that there were no bolt holes.

After the inquest, Tim's father Christopher, who was badly injured in the accident on Good Friday, 1994, said: "It has taken a long time to get this verdict. We will never get over Tim's death, but someone was responsible for it."

He had taken Tim and his brother David, 16, who was also injured, to the funfair on the first day it opened for the summer season. Mr Morgan is making a £500,000 compensation claim against Mr Evans.

John Bell, representing the Mor-

gan family, said that he would be taking the case back to the Crown Prosecution Service. "The verdict clearly shows that charges should be brought on the grounds of manslaughter." There had to be much more thoroughness in inspecting such rides, he added.

The CPS said: "A senior lawyer reviewed the evidence presented to us and the police were advised of our view concerning the strength of the case. We cannot comment on the inquest's findings until we examine them more closely."



Fine estate 'needs demolition job'

By IAN MURRAY

THE owner of one of the finest country homes in Britain sought permission to knock part of it down yesterday so that he can continue to live on the estate his family has run for more than 250 years.

As owner of Barrington Park, deep in the Cotswolds, Charles Wingfield, 72, has inherited 5,000 acres of woods, farms and parklands first obtained by his ancestor Lord Talbot, the Whig politician, in 1774. He is one of the last land owners who can claim to own a village.

He regards the 250 people who live as tenants in Great Barrington as members of his own family and his attempt to pull down part of his Grade I-listed home as an essential part of his strategy to keep the family together.

Their future is threatened by the cost of repairing and

maintaining the two large Victorian wings built on to the neo-Palladian building designed by William Kent in 1737. According to his counsel, Keith Lindblom, QC, the cost of renovating the "unworthy extensions" of 1873 with their "confusion of incompatible ornaments" will be in excess of £5 million.

He told a public inquiry that opened in Cirencester, Gloucestershire, yesterday that without the Victorian additions the home would be restored as "one of the finest examples of early 18th-century architecture in England". Even more important, he said, was "the traditional and essential relationship between the house and the families of the estate and the incontestable desirability of those relationships being maintained."

If £5 million had to be



Wingfield: would be letting people down

found to repair rooms that were useless there would be that much less income available to maintain the estate. Far better to pull down the "anachronistic extension" built to house a large family that no longer existed.

Mr Wingfield said: "I was charged with the very great privilege of running a great

family estate. I could not let the people here down. I could never open it to the public either because I don't want them wandering around my home."

Robin Mills is chairman of the Barrington Parish Council, which has unanimously backed the demolition plan. The local people are passionately in favour," he said. "The family is held in very great respect for all they do."

The Cotswold District Council voted by 19 to 18 on Monday to reject the application to tear down the Victorian wings. The public inquiry will continue until Christmas.

Richard Holder, of the Victorian Society which is opposing the plan, said the wings were excellent examples of the work of Macvicar Anderson, architect of the Junior Carlton Club. "They show how good Victorian architecture can be in keeping with older styles," he said.

Schoolgirl tortured, and killed, court told

By A STAFF REPORTER

A GIRL aged 15 was imprisoned in a torture chamber and sexually abused before being beaten to death and buried in a cellar, a court was told yesterday.

Nicola Iqbal and a second teenage girl were abducted by Mohammed Ayub, 42, and his accomplice Shakir Khan, the jury heard. Mr Ayub secured the silence of the girls. Mr Khan and his own wife by beatings using home-made torture equipment. Leeds Crown Court was told. The truth emerged when Mr Ayub

killed Mr Khan because he feared he could no longer trust him.

Police were called to a house in February 1995 in Bradford, west Yorkshire, where they found Mr Khan's body and later dug up the body of Nicola from the cellar. Mr Ayub yesterday denied two murder charges.

Robert Smith, QC, for the prosecution, said that Nicola was the daughter of Susan Iqbal, Mr Ayub's girlfriend. Her disappearance had been publicly explained by saying she had gone to Pakistan.

The trial continues.

Solicitor gave stolen clients' cash to needy

By TIM JONES

A SOLICITOR who robbed clients' accounts to help people in need was jailed for 18 months yesterday. Julian Spurrier stole £260,000 from his firm over 4½ years, using it to help people to pay for deposits on flats and to set others up in business.

Spurrier, 50, told Maidstone Crown Court that word had got around he was a mug: "I would get drunks robbing their palms asking for money." He had a compulsion to give money to anyone who had a suitable sob story. "I just

gave away other people's money. In other words, I stole my clients' money and it just got worse and worse."

People depended on him, he said, and often when he took money out of a bank they would be waiting outside for him to hand it over. Spurrier, of Whitstable, Kent, added: "I got a buzz out of being God, getting people homes."

Spurrier, who admitted ten charges of theft, lived frugally in a terraced house, the court was told. He was caught when the cashier at his firm, Mowll and Mowll, in Canterbury, became suspicious.

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Commission to tighten the law on corruption

By FRANCES GIBB, LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

PLANS to tighten the law on bribery and corruption among MPs and other public officials are being drawn up by the Law Commission in line with the recommendations of Lord Nolan's committee on standards in public life.

The review is likely to propose a statutory offence of corruption that would make it easier to bring prosecutions for offences of bribery. The Nolan committee said the Government should "clarify the law relating to the bribery or the receipt of a bribe by a Member of Parliament".

At present it is not clear whether the courts or Parliament should try such cases. Bribery of an MP, or the acceptance of a bribe by a member, is a contempt of court and can be punished by the House. But the Nolan report said it was "quite likely that Members of Parliament who accepted bribes in connection with their Parliamentary duties would be committing common law offences which could be tried by the courts".

Yesterday Lord Nolan said he would welcome a review of the law which was "extremely

vague and unclear". While not wishing to pre-empt the commission's proposals, he said: "Putting it shortly, I believe the courts should have jurisdiction. I can see that one could get into clashes between Parliament and the courts, but by and large I feel this is an area best dealt with in a trial by a jury."

The Law Commission, which is chaired by Dame Mary Arden, the High Court judge, has not yet formally announced its inquiry, but it is understood that a consultation paper will be published in a few weeks.

The present law on bribery is muddled and unclear. Prosecutions are rarely brought because of the problems of gathering evidence. The review, as well as proposing a new offence of corruption, is likely to look again at what constitutes corruption and at what point receipt of money or services becomes a bribe.

The law also requires updating because of the growth in new kinds of governmental bodies such as Next Step agencies. The status of officials within those agencies needs to be defined.



Christine Hamilton: "The idea I used to shop madly at Harrods is just not true"

Putting on a brave cheesy grin

By EMMA WILKINS

CHRISTINE HAMILTON — wife, secretary and No 1 fan of Neil — insisted yesterday that her shopping habits had not altered because of the cash for questions affair.

"The idea that I ever used to shop madly at Harrods is just not true. I haven't been there for eight or nine years. It's just not convenient for Westminster Tube," she said, putting on a brave face after her husband abandoned his

courtroom battle. Hiding her disappointment under immaculate make-up, a jaunty blazer and what she called "my cheesy grin", she said: "I always believe there is no point curling up in a heap in the corner hoping things will go away. You've got to come out and face the world and get on with things."

The couple, who married in 1983 just days before the general election, have a close marriage which has become stronger, Mrs Hamilton

said. "There have been times in the last two years when it has been difficult and I almost wish I'd married a bus driver, but then I immediately think the bus driver would have had to be Neil."

Mrs Hamilton, 46, admits to there having been tearful moments when the strain has taken its toll. "Very occasionally we have both been tempted to give up but once you've put your hand to the plough then you've got to see it through."

Hamilton pulls out of hostile reception at Downing Street

By ANDREW PIERCE, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

NEIL Hamilton withdrew at short notice from an embarrassing encounter with John Major at Downing Street last night as the full fury of the Prime Minister and Conservative Party surfaced over the "cash for questions" controversy.

John Major, Michael Heseltine and Brian Mawhinney, the Party chairman, were said to be "splitting" with rage last night over the role of Mr Hamilton in the abandoning of the libel trial against *The Guardian*.

Mr Hamilton had boasted yesterday that he would be going to Downing Street that night and that photographers "could get pictures of me there this evening if anybody is still interested".

But he withdrew from the reception hosted by Mr Major for the Adam Smith Institute only hours before the first guests began to arrive. He told ITN: "I'm far too busy just to spend my time in social intercourse and drinking."

One senior Tory party

source said last night: "If Mr Hamilton had not reached that decision by himself someone would have made it for him."

The former trade minister confirmed on Tuesday night that he had received payments of £6,000 and £4,000 from Ian Greer, the lobbyist, for the introduction of new business. The admission came 24 hours after Mr Hamilton and Mr Greer called off their battle against *The Guardian*. Mr Greer had been accused of paying the former minister to ask Parliamentary questions for Mohamed Al Fayed the owner of Harrods. Both men have denied the allegation.

Mr Greer, speaking yesterday for the first time about the controversy, called on the Director of Public Prosecutions to launch an investigation into Mr Al Fayed's claims that he passed on money for Parliamentary questions. He said: "If he is right he is guilty of a criminal act in trying to bribe MPs. I hope very much that the police are going to now look at Mr Al Fayed."

"The matter requires the highest level investigation. This is the same man who was accused of blackmail by the Prime Minister."

Mr Greer said that Mr Al Fayed had a grudge against the Government for refusing to grant him a British passport.

Mr Al Fayed, in a statement, repeated his allegation that Mr Greer had told him that "an MP could be hired in the

same way as you hail a taxi". He added: "As a businessman I could understand the concept that professionals in any field require payment for their services and I paid the sum that was asked for by Mr Greer."

With the controversy showing little sign of abating there was deepening anger in Downing Street at Mr Hamilton for plunging the Tory Party into renewed turmoil on the eve of the last conference before the general election.

Members of the Tattler Conservative Association remained resolute in their support for their MP. Neil Hamilton, yesterday, Pattie Turner-Smith, chairman of the women's section of the association, said members were fully behind him.

Letters, page 21



Hamilton: "too busy for social intercourse"

Greer launches media fightback

A MEDIA troubleshooter has been hired by Ian Greer, the political lobbyist, to lead his counter-attack against the wave of sleaze allegations (Andrew Pierce writes).

John Stenborough, 47, who runs his own media consultancy, moved into Mr Greer's office in Westminster on Tuesday evening. Mr Greer insists he broke no rules by paying commission payments to MPs in the 1980s.

Mr Stenborough, who was employed by the lobbyist when the allegations were first made in 1994, arrived only minutes before Neil Hamilton, the former trade and industry minister, appeared live on BBC2's *Newsnight*. Mr Hamilton had accepted a risky invitation to appear with Alan Rusbridger, the Editor of *The Guardian*, with Jeremy Paxman in the chair. Mr Hamilton is being advised by

a group of friends including Gerald Howarth, the former Tory MP. Mr Hamilton and Mr Howarth successfully sued the BBC over a *Panorama* programme in 1984.

The Hamilton fightback has been stalled by the absence of any public declarations of support from Tory MPs and Conservative Central Office. Most observers thought his appearance on *Newsnight* backfired.

Last night the Greer camp heard that further revelations were going to be published in the following day's *Times* and *Guardian*. Mr Greer decided to hit back, and yesterday appeared on lunchtime television and radio programmes.

Mr Greer rang fellow lobbyists to test the level of support. Sir Tim Bell, who is advising the Tories on their election strategy, was one of the first to declare his support.

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Report finds evidence of psychological, rather than viral cause of chronic fatigue

Royal colleges say there's no such thing as yuppie flu

By Nigel Hawkes, Science Editor

PATIENTS with extreme fatigue have been misled by claims that they are suffering from so-called yuppie flu, three royal medical colleges said yesterday.

Myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) is a "very inappropriate term" to describe a real condition, Dr Robert Kendell, President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, said.

Those who use it are of the unshakeable conviction that the illness is not psychological, and that a virus is responsible, he said. "It is wrong and meaningless to make this distinction between bodily and psychological illnesses."

The report, published by the Royal Colleges of Physicians, Psychiatrists and General Practitioners and undertaken at the request of the Chief Medical Officer, says that the condition should properly be called Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. It is common, affecting 1 to 2.5 per cent of the population, and causes serious suffering and disability.

But the use of the term ME, and the emphasis on finding a physical cause such as a virus, has not been helpful. The term ME "erroneously endorses the existence of a specific pathological process for which there is no evidence," the report says.

ME literally means inflammation of the brain and spinal cord, which are not found in sufferers from extreme fatigue. "We may have tried too hard to ascribe the condition to a specific cause," said Sir Leslie Turnberg, President of the Royal College of Physicians. "If we can't find a cause, we still have patients who need treatment."

The term yuppie flu was equally misleading, said Dr Simon Wessely, a psychiatrist from King's College School of Medicine in London and a member of the working group which produced the report. "It's a problem that affects all

classes," he said. "Some patients have very fixed beliefs about what's wrong with them and that is unhelpful."

The report cites more than 20 studies which have found that up to three quarters of chronic fatigue sufferers have some form of psychiatric disorder, including depression and anxiety. In many cases anti-depressants prescribed by GPs can help. In some cases the condition may be triggered by viral disease, such as glandular fever, but there is no evidence that persistent viral infection underlies the disease.

The report suggests a clear definition for the condition: six months of severe disabling fatigue that is made worse by physical or mental exertion and for which no adequate medical explanation can be found.

The best approach to treatment consists of graded exercise programmes — in which the patient is set gradually increasing targets — which may be combined with cognitive behaviour therapy. This involves the patient discussing the condition with a therapist and being helped to understand it better. Patients are helped to combat depression and anxiety and examine whether their underlying thoughts or assumptions might be contributing to their disability.

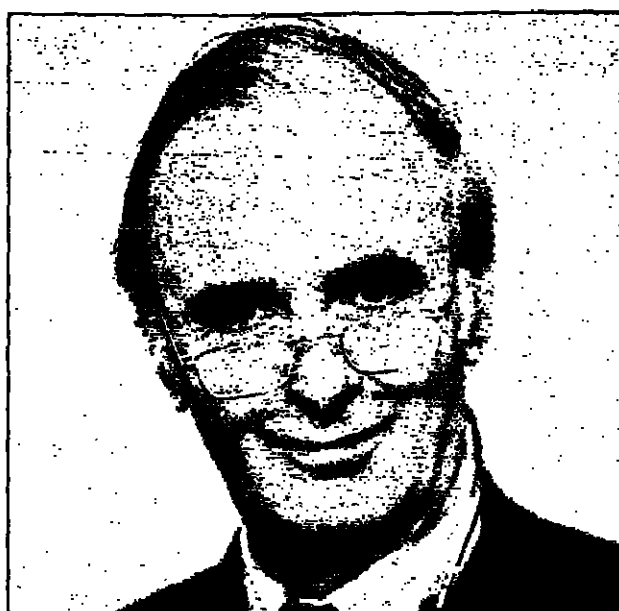
Except for cases in which anti-depressants may help, drugs are seldom useful and there are changes in diet, the report says. Prolonged bed rest or, at the other extreme, excessive exercise were equally unhelpful.

Dr Kendell told a news conference at the Royal College of Physicians in London that all those involved in the problem must realise that the distinction between the physical and psychological was illusory. The syndrome lay in a "grey area" between the

physical and psychological poles, leading to "controversy and passions" inside and outside the medical world. He admitted that some doctors could be dismissive of chronic fatigue, telling patients to "pull themselves together" and failing to recognise a genuine problem.

Four charities representing sufferers, including the ME Association and Action for ME, responded with a statement saying that the report was biased towards psychiatric factors and that its estimate of the number of sufferers was much too high.

"While we are disappointed by the general thrust of the report, we do wholeheartedly agree with the unequivocal acknowledgment that this is a genuine and seriously debilitating condition which is poorly understood and poorly managed by many doctors," the statement said.



Dr Stuttaford and Ms Rantzen each found something in the report to support their conflicting views on ME

Antagonists resume war of words

By Joanna Bale

THE report led to a resumption of the war of words between Dr Thomas Stuttaford, the Times columnist, Miss Rantzen was criticised recently by Dr Stuttaford, who said he was "set up" when booed and hissed by an invited audience on BBC's Rantzen Report.

Dr Stuttaford said that the report had totally supported his view that psychological factors, including depression, can be significant. Ms Rantzen said,

however, that "at no stage does the report ever say that it is a kind of depression". Wrong, says Dr Stuttaford: "What it actually says is that over half the sufferers have signs of depression."

Miss Rantzen, whose daughter Emily, 18, has ME, also says that the report supports a viral cause for the disease. "The report does say that it is directly related to the virus which causes glandular fever, which was how my daughter developed it," she said.

Wrong again, says Dr Stuttaford. "What it says is that only in occasional

cases, less than 10 per cent, is the condition triggered by a virus, and that viruses can in no way account for the persistence of the condition."

Ms Rantzen said she found it very sad that Dr Stuttaford should be so antagonistic to the views expressed to him by patients and their families. He denies being antagonistic. "Her memory of the events is very different from my own. I am very sympathetic to people who suffer the condition."

Body & Mind, page 18

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Barclay brothers challenge TV privacy laws

By Russell Jenkins

THE millionaire Barclay brothers went to the High Court yesterday to challenge Britain's laws on privacy.

David and Frederick Barclay, 41, who go to extraordinary lengths to protect their home in the Channel Islands from prying eyes, were furious when a BBC reporter turned up on Breckhou in a small dinghy to film a documentary.

They want to change the law governing television broadcasters after they were told that the Broadcasting Complaints Commission could not investigate a complaint until after the programme had been shown. The item about the twins' extraordinary Gothic castle was shown on BBC2's media programme *The Spin* last October.

Their lawyers are seeking a judicial review into the commission's interpretation of the Broadcasting Act in an action which, some fear could lead to gagging orders on broadcasters. Peter Duffy, counsel for the brothers, who own The Ritz Hotel as well as *The European*, told Mr Justice Sedley that the case involved a discreet but important point: whether there should be a statutory mechanism for the commission to provide protection against the invasion of privacy by journalists prior to broadcast.

The case arose from an investigation by the media programme in August 1995 when John Sweeney, a reporter, gained access by boat to the island, which is separated

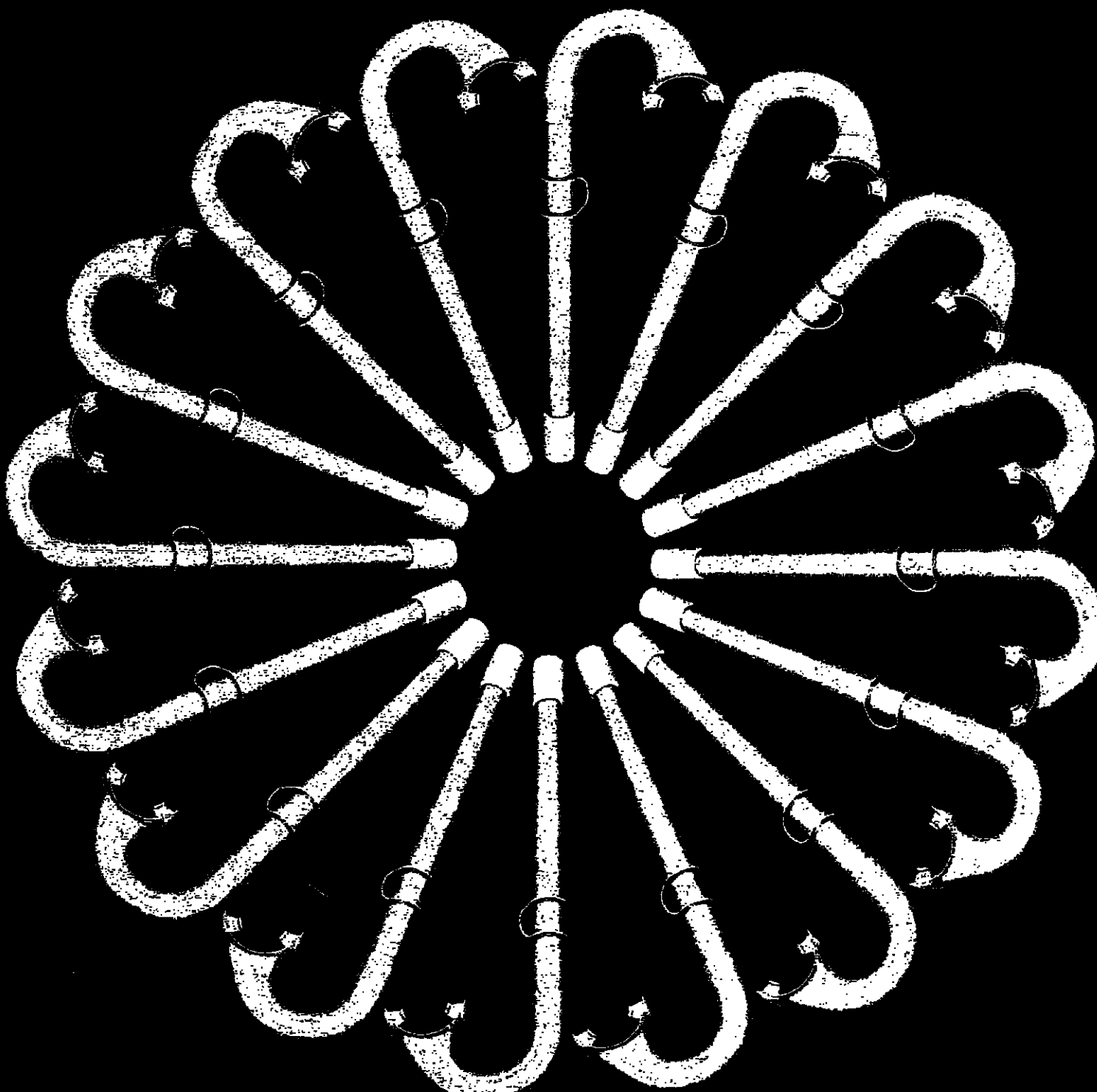
from neighbouring Sark by a treacherous channel.

Mr Duffy said the brothers had no remedy before transmission because the wording of the statute was ambiguous. The 1981 Broadcasting Act says that no infringement of privacy can be undertaken until the programme is "actually so broadcast". Subsequent Acts have tidied up the language but have failed to clear up the confusion.

The failure to redress an infringement of privacy prior to broadcast contravenes the European Convention on Human Rights, which guarantees respect for private and family life, he said.

Mark Shaw, counsel for the BBC, quoted ministers' remarks and said that the commission had followed a clear and unambiguous interpretation of the law. He said: "No doubt there was an invasion but Parliament has taken the view that a line has to be drawn and that line is after there has been a broadcast. If Parliament had intended the law to apply before a broadcast it would have said so."

The BBC, represented by Robert Englehart, QC, supported the commission's interpretation. Mr Justice Sedley is due to deliver his judgment early next week. The Barclays lodged a formal complaint after the broadcast. An inquiry has been held but has not yet reported its findings. The brothers bought the island in 1993 for an estimated £23 million.



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Roedean old girl posed as chemist to order drugs

By A STAFF REPORTER

A FORMER Roedean School pupil was sent cocaine and heroin by a pharmaceutical company after she pretended that she planned to open a chemist's shop.

Rachael Salbstein, 33, whose boyfriend was a drug user, received nearly £1,500 worth of class A drugs in less than a month after placing orders in a false name. She thought of the idea after seeing a television programme about setting up a chemist's and leafed through Yellow Pages for drug companies.

Salbstein admitted to Portsmouth Crown Court seven charges of obtaining property by deception and supplying drugs. She and Tony Sullivan, 31, with whom she lives at Bedhampton, Hampshire, were put on probation for two years. Sullivan admitted five charges of aiding and abetting and possessing drugs.

The drug company, Martindale Pharmaceuticals, had failed to check if Salbstein was a qualified pharmacist. An employee eventually alerted police after seeing an article in

the trade journal *Chemist and Druggist* warning pharmacists of the bogus chemist who called herself G.M. Pullen. Two other companies she had contacted had notified police.

Salbstein copied out the full names of drugs from a nursing guide so that she appeared to be a pharmacist. She ordered a heroin derivative, cocaine paste, used in nasal operations, and morphine sulphate, used to relieve back pain.

A courier made six deliveries from Martindale to the couple's home.

Sullivan told police that when the first arrived "it was brilliant — it was like all my birthdays had come". Judge Selwood ordered him to attend a rehabilitation course.

The judge also said that the conduct of Martindale Pharmaceuticals, of Romford, Essex, was "the most appalling breach of safety procedures which ought to have been applied". The company said after the case that it had submitted a report to the Home Office.



Rachael Salbstein leafed through Yellow Pages for the names of drug companies

'Had he known, he would have given his consent'

Man in sperm case died hoping wife was pregnant

By PETER FOSTER

A WOMAN who was banned from using her dead husband's sperm to have a baby thought she was pregnant at the time of his death, the High Court was told yesterday.

The 30-year-old widow, known for legal reasons as Mrs B, asked for the sperm to be taken from her husband as he lay in a coma after catching meningitis in March last year.

She later discovered she was not pregnant but was told by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority that she could not use the sperm because her late husband had not given his written consent.

Yesterday, in the first court action of its kind, she asked for permission to be artificially inseminated in Britain or, if the law did not allow this, to have the sperm exported to America or Europe, where she could receive treatment.

The case, which has been the catalyst for a wide-ranging debate on the ethics of artificial insemination, is expected

to last up to three days.

Lord Lester of Herne Hill, QC, for Mrs B, said that his client, in seeking to have her late husband's child, was being faithful to his wishes as well as her own. The couple had "so much wanted" a baby together, he said.

Lord Lester said the couple had married in church in 1991 and had specifically requested the traditional service from the 1622 prayer book, which puts greater emphasis on procreation in marriage.

He said the couple had discussed the issue of artificial insemination in some detail after reading a newspaper article on the subject. It was because of their knowledge of the possibilities of artificial insemination that Mrs B had asked doctors to take sperm samples from her husband before he died.

When Mrs B's husband fell ill, the couple mistakenly hoped and believed that Mrs B was pregnant. Lord Lester said they had subscribed to a baby magazine and had made

alterations to their home in preparation. Lord Lester added: "There is cogent and compelling evidence, not disputed by the authority, that her husband approved of the use of artificial insemination in the kind of circumstances which arose in his case. This is the central and important fact which distinguishes it from other cases."

"They had specifically thought about it. He lacked the capacity at the time to give his consent, but his wishes were well known beforehand. Had he known he was about to fall unconscious and the consent form was thrust in front of him, on Mrs B's evidence, he would have signed."

He argued that the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority had taken an "unduly narrow approach" to the law when ordering that the frozen sperm could not be used. Under the 1990 Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act, sperm donors must give written consent for the use of

their sperm unless the donation is made between a couple being treated together.

Lord Lester said that Mrs B's late husband's written consent was therefore needed only after his death when, in the eyes of the law, he in effect became an anonymous donor. "Why should Mrs B's husband, though she had known him for several years, be regarded as a complete stranger?" he asked.

A statement from Baroness Warnock, who chaired the Committee of Inquiry on Human Fertilisation and Embryology, was read to the judge. Sir Stephen Brown, in support of Mrs B's case.

In the statement Baroness Warnock said: "I feel certain, had the Committee of Inquiry considered such a case, we would have seen no ethical or public policy objections to allowing the woman to become pregnant by the use of her husband's frozen sperm, either in this country or abroad."

The case continues.

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Massive black hole 'at centre of galaxy'

By NIGEL HAWKES

SCIENTISTS believe they have proved the existence of a black hole in the centre of the galaxy which is several million times the mass of the Sun and sucks in gas and stars.

The hole, at the centre of the Milky Way, has been identified by calculations by Andreas Eckart and Reinhard Genzel, of the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics, near Munich, who measured the "proper motions" of the stars around the putative black hole over a five-year period.

These showed that the velocities of the stars declined the further they were from the centre, just as one would expect if they were in orbit around it, they report in *Nature*. The velocity data also support the idea that the stars are in circular orbit, pulled into shape by the enormous mass at the centre. First results suggest that these stars are moving at 1,000 miles per second.

From the data the mass of the object around which the stars are rotating is 2.4 million times the mass of the Sun. Since there is no object of remotely this size visible in the centre, the only conclusion is it must be a black hole.

Shame over buck teeth led student to suicide

By A STAFF REPORTER

A STUDENT from Paris whose life was ruined by her buck teeth left a 13-page suicide letter in her hotel room before plunging into the Thames, an inquest heard yesterday. She had carefully planned her death and travelled to London to carry it out, the City Coroner's Court was told.

A suicide verdict was recorded on Anne-Laure Charlette Gouillart, 25, who died in April. Her note read: "I am going to kill myself because I have buck teeth. I will fully put an end to my fears and exhaustion. I now only have one fear, to mess it up and wake in a hospital room in more despair."

The woman had booked into a hotel in Victoria the day before she abandoned her belongings there and killed herself. PC Nigel Selby, who dealt with the case, said afterwards: "It is a complete mystery to her family and friends why she did this. She had a perfectly normal life in France."

"You don't know what goes through the minds of young women; they have an image of perfection and take it to the extreme. Her teeth did not protrude excessively."

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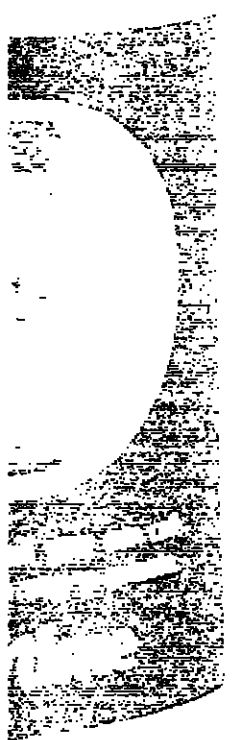
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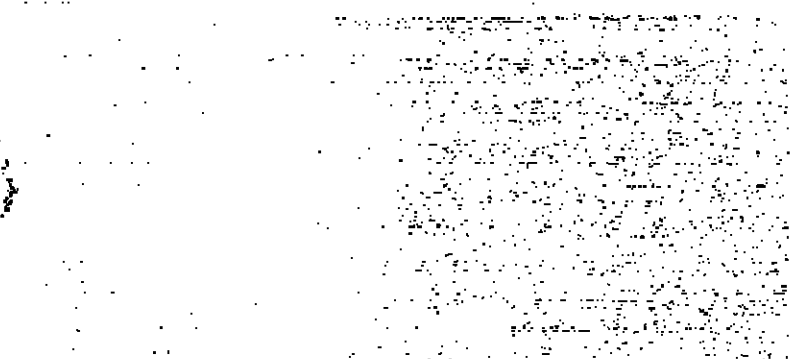
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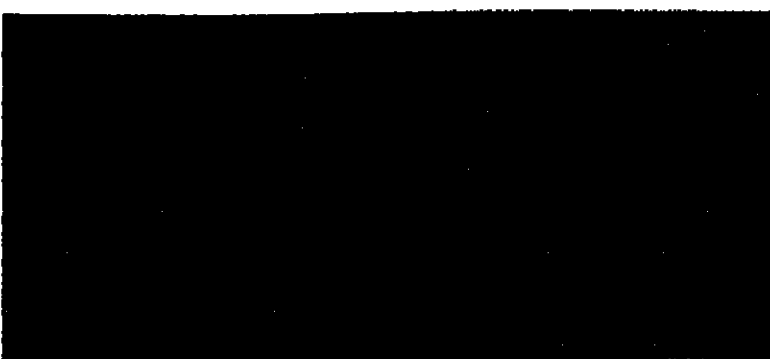
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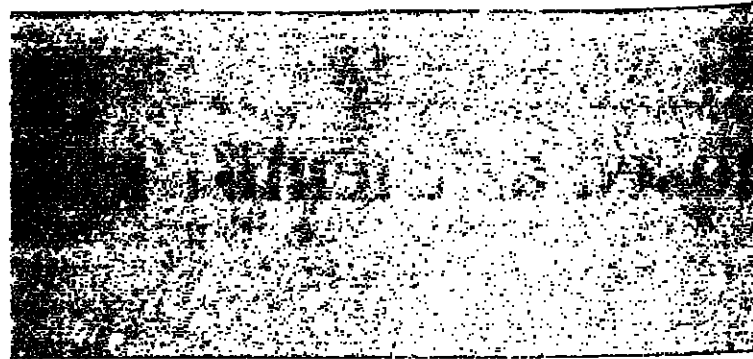
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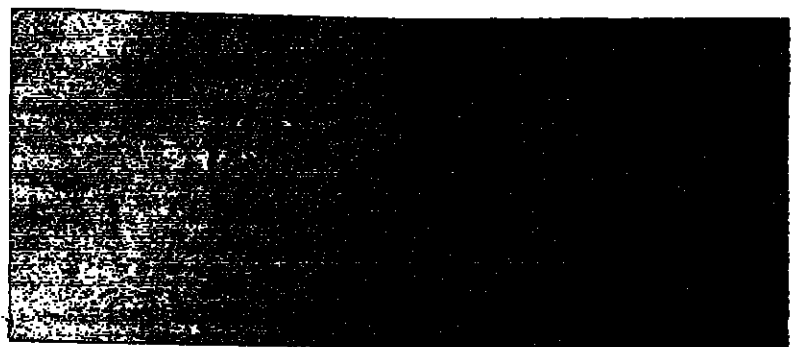
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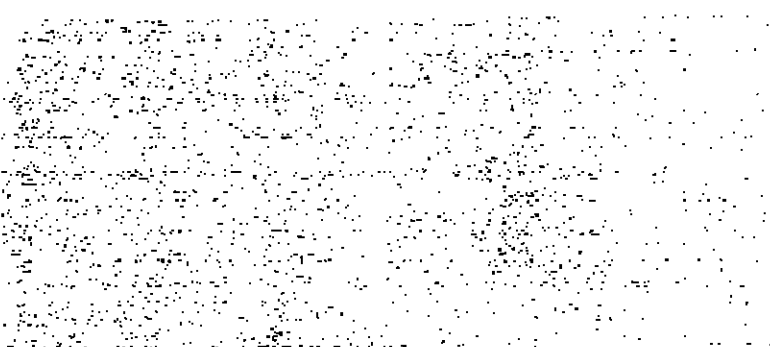
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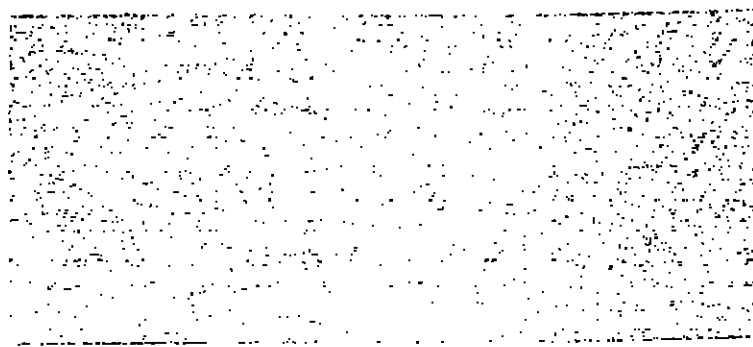
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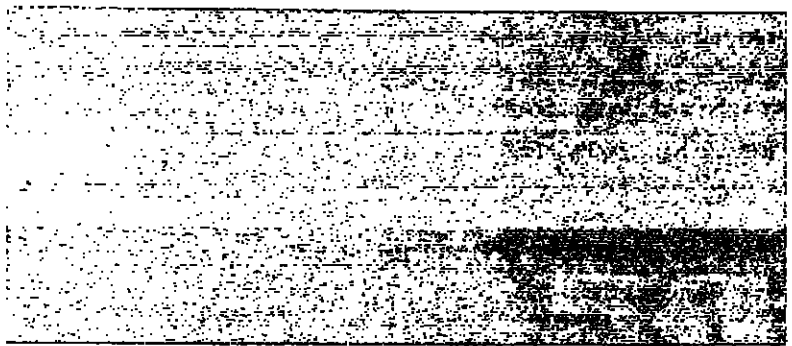
Royal Blue



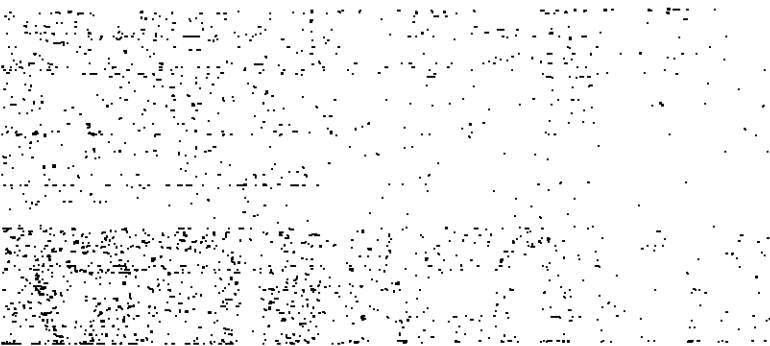
Light Mauve



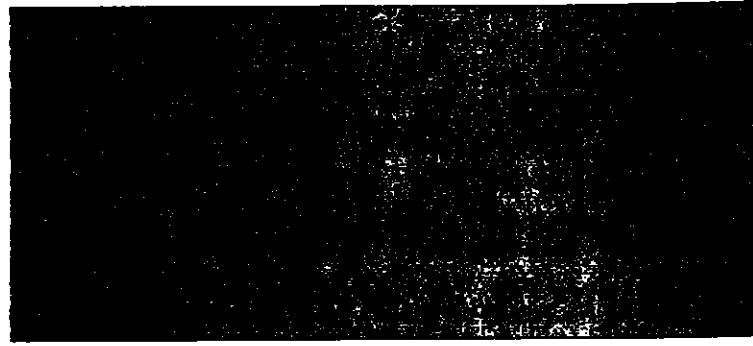
Chrome Orange



Brick Red



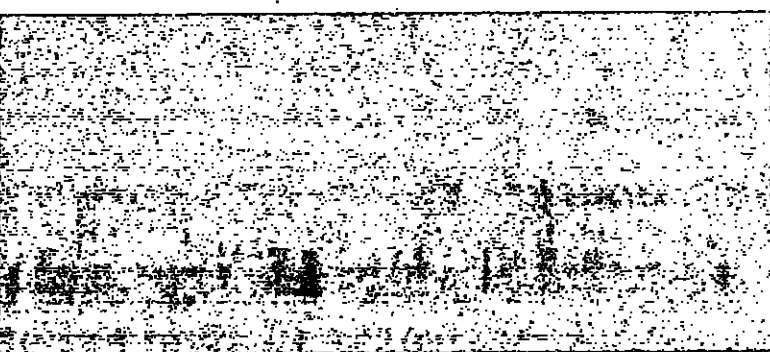
Minty Green



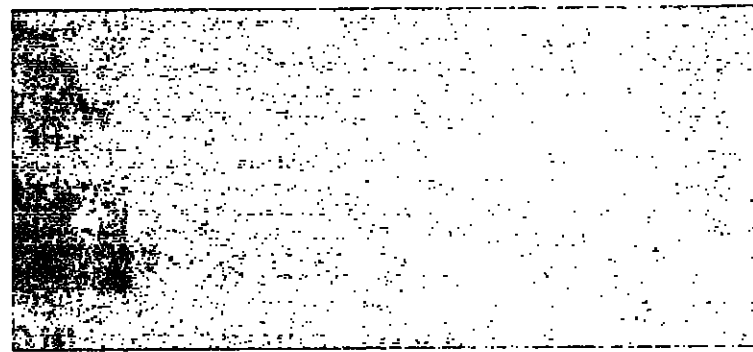
Imperial Purple



Prussian Blue



Hot Pink



Sky Blue



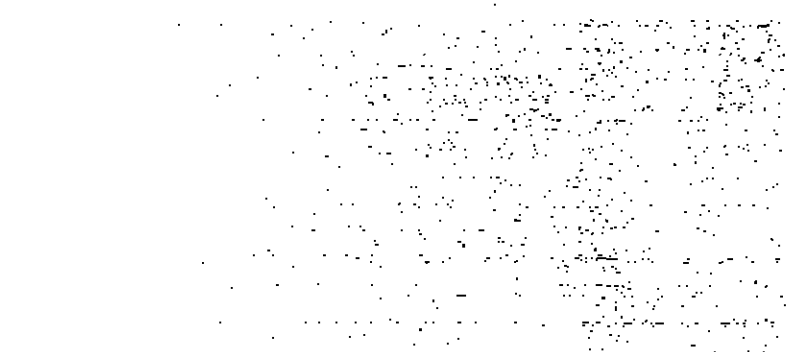
Barium Yellow



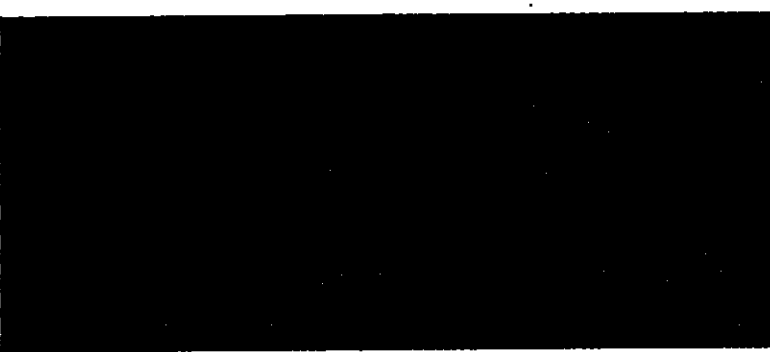
Mid Blue



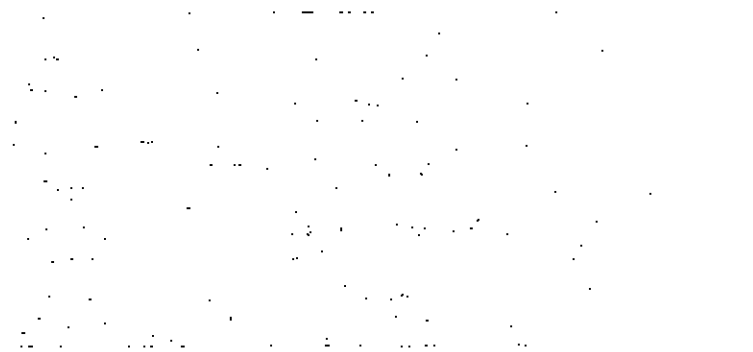
Marine Green



Pastel Pink



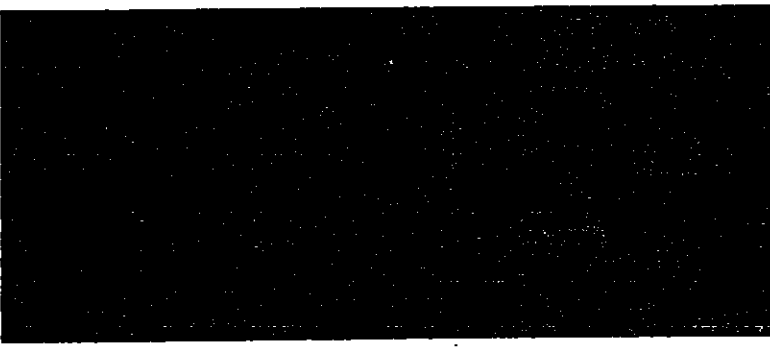
Dale Green



Soft Peach



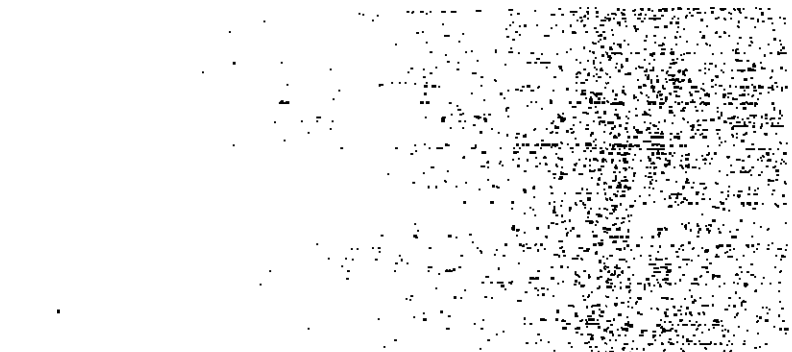
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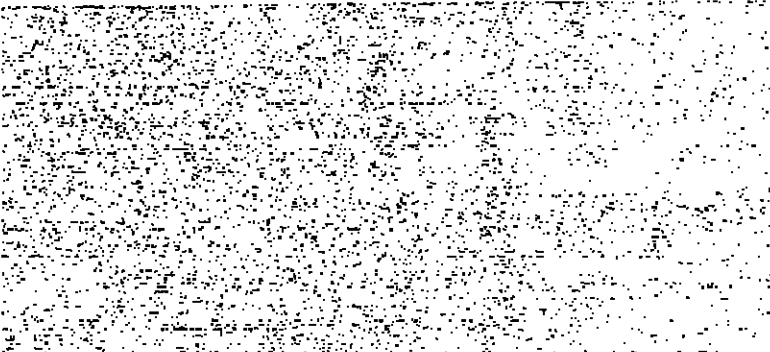
Saddle Brown



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Yes ☐ No ☐



Soaring: the national survey found numbers of stonechats, marsh tits, greylag geese and ravens were increasing

Plummeting: populations of golden plovers, oystercatchers, mute swans and swallows were found to be falling

New survey upsets theories of declining bird numbers

By MICHAEL HORNSBY, COUNTRYSIDE CORRESPONDENT

A NEW survey of Britain's birds has thrown into confusion previous notions of declining numbers by including habitats not normally considered, such as urban and suburban areas.

The survey also suggests that some birds are staging a comeback, despite damage to their habitats from rural development and intensive farming, thanks to the European Union's much-criticised set-aside policy.

Among farmland birds previously thought to be in long-term decline, linnet and yellow wagtails recorded increases of 15 per cent and 24 per cent between 1994 and 1995, according to the survey, the first of a planned annual bird census. It was carried out

by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), representing government countryside agencies.

Set-aside, which requires farmers to leave some land fallow, might have helped linnet by leaving more undisturbed sites for feeding and nesting. If so, the benefit could prove short-lived as the amount of land farmers have to leave uncropped has been halved this year. Of almost 100 species of breeding birds monitored, 27 increased, 12 declined and 58 remained stable, a much less gloomy picture than has emerged from most recent studies. Greylag geese, stonechats, sand martins,



The sand martin, left, showed an increase, but jays were among species showing the most striking decline



marsh tits and ravens recorded population increases of between 35 and 169 per cent. Golden plovers, oystercatchers, jays, mute swans and swallows suffered the most striking declines, ranging from 17 to 63 per cent.

Ornithologists said the findings were encouraging but cautioned against reading too much into one year's figures. They said some of the results would be corrected in subsequent counts.

Mike Everett, of the RSPB, said: "Previous monitoring has concentrated almost exclusively on farmland and woodland habitats and has had a strong bias towards southern England, the most intensively farmed area. This probably led to underestimates of the overall size of bird populations. The new survey is nationwide and includes upland

grassland, heaths, bogs and other habitats, including urban and suburban areas. This should give a truer picture, particularly of birds not heavily dependent on farmland and woodland. Urban areas support many birds."

An apparent 169 per cent increase in greylag geese is being treated with scepticism. Chris Harbard, also of the RSPB, said: "We know that the geese, essentially farmland birds that have gone wild, have been on the increase, but there is no way they could have gone up one and a half times in a year."

Ornithologists are more confident of some of the other findings. Increases in numbers of goldcrests (up 30 per cent), wrens (14 per cent) and robins (11 per cent) are attributed to the mild winter of 1994-95. However, their numbers may have been adversely affected by the harsher and longer 1995-96 winter.

Richard Bashford, of the BTO, who co-ordinated the survey, said: "Many summer migrants did well, including whistled tit, chiffchaff and willow warblers, probably because of good rain and feeding conditions in sub-Saharan Africa where they winter. This meant more of them returned here and produced more young." The survey confirmed that, while some farmland birds may have recovered, others are still in decline, among them swallows, kestrels and bullfinches.

Ornithologists were surprised by the big drops recorded in mute swans and golden plovers by 22 per cent and 63 per cent respectively. Mr Everett said: "We are pretty certain the golden plover figure was distorted by the inclusion of large numbers of migrant birds of passage in the 1994 count. The apparent decline in swans is more mysterious as all other recent surveys show they are increasing."

Consumer champion aims to revive role

By ROBIN YOUNG

THE Consumers' Association is seeking to revitalise its role as a campaigning political pressure group.

The organisation, which publishes the *Which?* group of magazines and has almost 750,000 members, is doing the rounds of the party conferences touting a manifesto called *Making Markets Work*, which catalogues the reforms the association would like the next government to initiate.

Stephen Harris, director of communications, said yesterday: "We are trying to get back to the role CA had in the 1970s. During the 1980s consumerism became confused with consumption. Legitimate consumer concerns were pushed aside while attention focused on how much money people had and how much they were spending. We still see that with all the talk about the 'feel-good' factor."

Mr Harris said the present Government clearly attached high value to the interests of industry and other producers. "They attach very low value to consumer interests. The deregulation initiative is a much clearer indication where this Government is coming from than the Citizen's Charter," he said. "If consumers had even an equal footing with producers in the Government's consideration there would not have been the terrible mess in the Government's reactions to the BSE crisis," he claimed.

Mr Harris said the association had identified six key areas. Campaign teams have been established in the fields of communications, health, including food, personal finance, public utilities, redress, and transport. "From now on we intend to punch our weight," Mr Harris said. "A call for higher standards among professional bodies involved in drafting laws was made by the Consumers' Association after a survey found that more than a quarter were incorrect or confusing. In a survey of 51 wills, reported in *Which?*, a panel of legal experts rated 15 as "poor", 24 were "average" and only 12 were "good".

Leading article, page 21

Stables fire man in court

A man commended for his actions during a stable fire that killed four racehorses appeared before Wiltshire magistrates charged with causing criminal damage. Brian Simpson, 43, from Wroughton, Wiltshire, spent three days in hospital after being dragged unconscious from the fire at the trainer Jim Old's complex. He was jailed until November 28.

Tokyo jailing

John Irvine, 25, from Jersey, was jailed for five years by a court in Tokyo for importing 1.5 kg of opium into Japan. Irvine, who admitted the offence, was arrested after arriving on a flight from Thailand. He was also fined the equivalent of £5,900.

Rapist jailed

Ian Clarke, 24, of Rainham, Kent, who followed a 14-year-old girl home from a railway station, forced his way into her house and raped her, was jailed for ten years at Maidstone. The judge ordered that he should be strictly supervised after release.

Festival returns

The Glastonbury Festival is to return next year with places for an extra 20,000 music fans after being cancelled this summer. The move will increase capacity to 100,000 for the event, to be held on June 27, 28 and 29. A park-and-ride scheme is planned.

Turned turtle

A giant leatherback turtle has been washed up on the Isle of Lewis. The slightly decomposed creature, about 7ft by 4ft, is believed to have come from the mid-Atlantic or the Caribbean. It was believed to be the first to be found on the island in ten years.

Clock voice dies

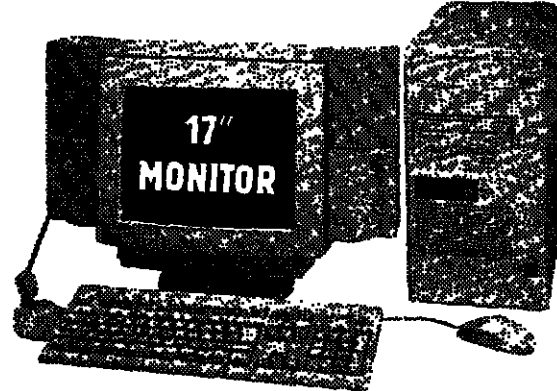
The actress who provided the voice for Britain's first speaking clock has died aged 90 in a nursing home in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. In 1936 Jane Cain won a competition to declare over the telephone: "At the third stroke, the time will be..."

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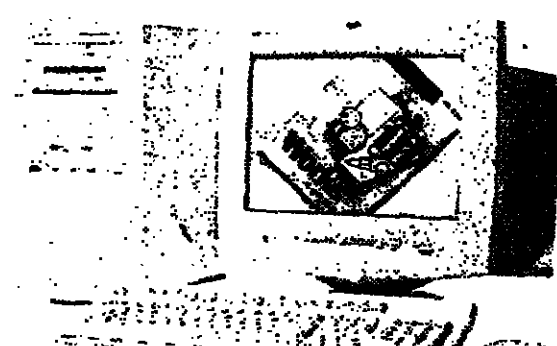
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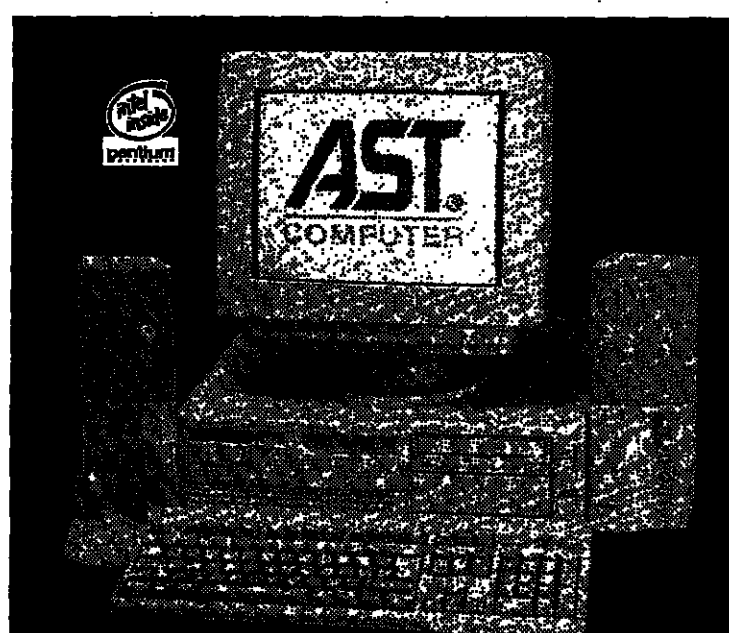
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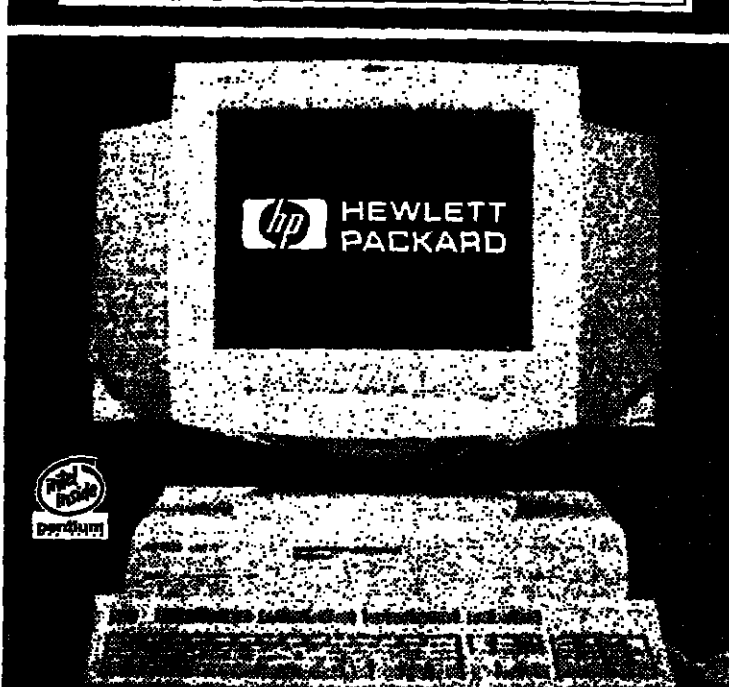
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'She could not accept Germany ending the century a winner and her own nation a loser'

How Thatcher used tea and tanks to outgun Kohl

FROM ROGER BOYES IN BONN

BARONESS THATCHER was a driven woman who, according to the Chancellor Helmut Kohl, never let him get a word in edgeways. Whenever he tried, she used to snap at him not to interrupt her.

The German leader's observations, laced with occasional respectful asides about the former Prime Minister, appeared in his memoir of the unification years that was launched with much pomp in Bonn yesterday. The Chancellor, it seems, cannot chase away the ghost of Lady Thatcher, who was the one leader who openly stated her distrust of German ambitions in Europe.

—We had fierce arguments on several occasions. As a rule it went like this: she talked at

an unbelievable speed and did not let me utter a word. When I tried, after a while, to open my mouth, she snapped, and interrupted me: 'You're talking all the time!' Herr Kohl noted that Mrs Thatcher used the teapot, rather than her handbag, in her negotiating tactics. "Whenever the atmosphere grew icy, she poured out tea. It took me a while to work out why: that she regarded readiness to compromise as a sign of weakness."

His book, entitled *I Wanted German Unity*, is part of the public fanfare to mark Herr Kohl's 14 years in office: at the end of the month he overtakes Konrad Adenauer's record tenure. But it is also neatly timed to revive mixed memories of Lady Thatcher's views on German unification, the

sixth anniversary of which falls today.

Herr Kohl recalls that at a NATO summit the discussion centred on the medium-range nuclear weapons to be stationed in Germany. "Margaret Thatcher spoke the whole time about cowardice without naming names. Everybody knew however that she was referring to me because I was opposed to the deployment of the missiles."

On another occasion, the Chancellor recalled the competitiveness of the British leader. During a troop visit in Germany, Lady Thatcher and Herr Kohl climbed into tanks for the photographers. It naturally took the Chancellor somewhat longer to squeeze into the turret and Mrs Thatcher seized the moment



... Lady Thatcher seized the moment, got in ahead of the Chancellor and pulled the trigger. "Margaret shot first and, of course, she hit the target," he recalls

German unity. But in the book, he passes over this with surprisingly gentle irony. In Cambridge in March 1990, he recalls, "she honoured my efforts to keep united Germany within Nato and in doing so tried to give the impression that she was always for unification". Lady Thatcher's chief problem, writes the Chancellor, was that she could not accept the possibility that the Germans would end the current century as a winner while her own nation, twice threatened by the Germans, could emerge as a loser. She was stuck, according to Herr Kohl, in an outdated vision of history, a 19th century balance-of-power philosophy.

Herr Kohl on Mr Gorbachev. The Chancellor had to be persuaded to write the book by one of his collaborators, the trusted tabloid journalist Kai Diekmann. The other co-author is best known as biographer of Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi propaganda chief. The Chancellor's views were dictated late at night in the Chancellery and the book was put together at his Austrian holiday home. There are few surprises in it, only the occasional sharp insight into the personalities of other statesmen and women.

Herr Kohl swears that he will not write a full autobiography and, for the time being at least, his most revealing work is a cook book, bringing together recipes from favourite restaurants and pitstops in Germany. Its authenticity has recently taken a knock. On a talk show last month he said he used an astonishing 18 eggs to make crème caramel, his favourite dessert. He may not be as expert a cook as the recipe book makes out and there are suspicions it may have been ghosted.



Mitterrand: recalled with affection by Kohl

The Chancellor confesses to confusion at Lady Thatcher's rapid shift in temperament, expressing amazement at how she could one moment radiate warmth and the next switch to cold-blooded attack. But he appears to have valued her honesty. "Margaret Thatcher, this highly talented, determined and respectable woman who always stuck to her views, fought openly and did not try to go behind my back, a quality that I highly respect." Praise for Mrs Thatcher's honesty may have been directed at the French, whose doubts about German unity were never expressed with full candour, even though Herr Kohl has only pleasant words for the late French President, François Mitterrand.

Mr Bush is a police memoir, as before, leader still in office. He is the last of the principal actors on stage since 1989-90 to give his view of German unification: George Bush, Lady Thatcher, Mikhail Gorbachev, M Mitterrand, James Baker and Hans Dietrich Genscher have all had their say. They show broad agreement on the substance but clear differences of emphasis. Herr Kohl is nicer to Mr Bush than was Lady Thatcher. Mr Bush, in turn, is harsher than

The trouble with Helmut: 'He is so German!'

BY MICHAEL DYNES AND PHILLIP WEBSTER

THE majority of Britons may have believed the war with Germany ended in 1945 but for Baroness Thatcher the enmity never really stopped.

Her uneasy relationship with Helmut Kohl, whom she regarded as a sly, German "provincial politician", was set against the backdrop of her own anxieties over German economic power and her resentment at the Franco-German relationship in Europe.

Lady Thatcher's most cutting remarks about the Chancellor were usually made in

another bilateral meeting in Herr Kohl's home town of Oeggersheim, he offered Lady Thatcher a traditional Bavarian dish of pig's stomach, which she duly consumed, although clearly did not enjoy. Herr Kohl did much of the talking about the future of Europe and told Sir Charles Powell, Lady Thatcher's adviser, that he hoped he had got over to her that he was a strong European. Relieved to return to the sanctuary of her VC10, Lady Thatcher kicked off her shoes and declared: "That man is so German!"

private. But occasionally they leaked into the public domain. In her Downing Street memoirs, Lady Thatcher wrote: "I always had the highest regard for Helmut Schmidt's wisdom, straightforwardness and grasp of international economics. Sadly, I never developed quite the same relationship with Chancellor Kohl."

Their prickly relationship was the talk of senior diplomatic circles for years. They just found it hard to be together. Things were not helped when the workaholic Prime Minister, on holiday in Switzerland, decided that she and the resting Herr Kohl should meet in Austria.

The story goes that after taking what he felt was quite enough of Lady Thatcher's lecturing, Herr Kohl left, pleading another appointment. The frustrated Prime Minister went out for a walk, only to find Herr Kohl with his aides in a cafe gorging himself on cream cakes. At

When she was not lambasting Herr Kohl for his failure to master his brief at summit meetings, Lady Thatcher was denouncing him for his "grand gestures" and "gushes of Euro-enthusiasm." Bitter quarrels over the pace of European integration, the future of Nato and the speed of German unification led to many a "handbagging".

He never said it in public, but few were more relieved at their fall from power in 1990 than Herr Kohl. However, he showed a compassionate side on the fateful night when she failed to secure a majority in the first ballot of the Tory leadership election. Lady Thatcher heard the result at the British Embassy in Paris and then went off to a dinner with world leaders. As luck would have it, her neighbour was Herr Kohl who, as he sat down beside her, declared: "Mrs Thatcher, it is my duty for the next two hours to cheer you up."

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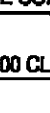
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Party plays big brother to Westminster hopefuls

By JILL SHERMAN, CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

LABOUR parliamentary candidates have received a set of "Big Brother" instructions on how they should prepare for Westminster, including which hotels to choose, who to employ, and what to tell the bank manager.

Donald Dewar, the Chief Whip, has also advised candidates to visit Westminster before Parliament assembles so that they "can pace around the buildings" and find their bearings before their first day. It informs candidates that the whips' office has a list of people seeking to work for Labour MPs and is compiling a list of suitable hotels.

The instructions, which warn candidates that loyalty and unity will be essential, are contained in a guide to party candidates that has been distributed at Blackpool.

The document includes advice ranging from travel arrangements, computer facilities, and the inner workings of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP). In a section entitled Accommodation in London, it advises MPs to stay in hotels at Westminster for

the first few months. "The Additional Costs Allowance more than covers four nights a week in a reasonable hotel. The whips' office is presently compiling a list of suitable hotels in the Westminster and Victoria areas and with luck will have negotiated preferential rates for Labour MPs in time for the next Parliament." In the longer term, MPs may want to buy or rent in London, it says. "The whips' office keeps a file of estate agents and property rental agencies."

On hiring staff it warns of the pitfalls of advertising. "This will result in hundreds of applications which have to be scrutinised and replied to — quite a daunting task especially with no staff to help."

It discloses that the PLP office keeps a file of CVs of people seeking to work for Labour MPs. "You may consult this file but it is important to note that a candidate's inclusion in the file does not constitute any kind of 'seal of approval'."

It also advises candidates to negotiate an overdraft with



their bank manager. "You will have to pay out for accommodation, petrol and some office expenses then reclaim the money from the Fees Office on a monthly basis. It may take up to six weeks from spending the money to getting it back. You may well need to discuss this issue with your bank manager at an early stage, particularly if you have had no income during the election campaign."

The document, which assumes a Labour victory, devotes a big section to the importance of party discipline after the general election. "Only once the general election is won will the real work

really begin. Winning the general election will mean nothing if a Labour government cannot get its legislation onto the Statute Book and build a platform for a second term." To achieve this, it says, the Parliamentary Labour Party must command a continued majority in the House of Commons.

"In adversity this majority can be tested on a daily basis. Unity and ability to act in concert is, and always has been, the cornerstone of Labour movement power. It will be no different in the Government led by Tony Blair."

Mr Dewar's latest demand for unity comes as the party reviews its disciplinary procedures. There is speculation that there will be a crackdown on rebels.

Yesterday party sources described the guide, written by Mr Dewar, Nick Brown, deputy chief whip, and Doug Hoyle, chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party, as a standard document. A spokesman said it was designed to give candidates a guide to the Commons and the pressures MPs will be under when they arrive.



Jackie Stacey, senior presentation officer, who arranges everything from the lavish set to the shape of the water tumblers

Showing Labour in a good light

JAMES LANDALE
POLITICAL REPORTER

FORGET the spin-doctors. The mastermind of presentation responsible for Labour's slick image at the Blackpool conference is Jackie Stacey.

Mrs Stacey, 38, decides what colour of paint looks good behind Tony Blair, what type of set he should speak from, and what music should accompany his entrance to the hall. With her team of party workers and technicians, she is

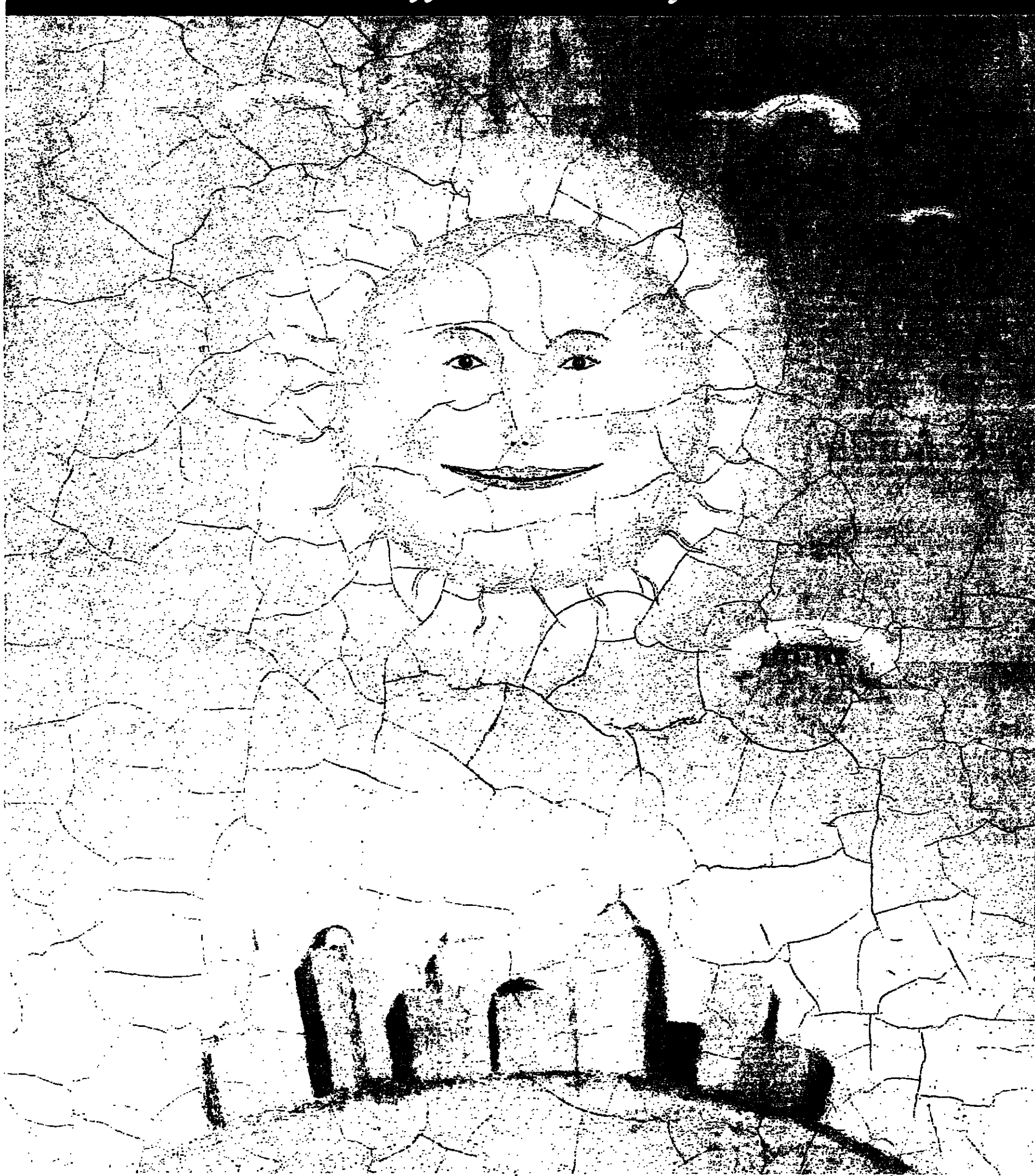
responsible for the videos that precede the big speeches, the lighting, the auto-cues, even the shape of the water tumblers for those on the platform.

Since she took over the job in 1993, she has stage-managed and choreographed the party's press conferences, public meetings, and party conferences. This week she can be seen wandering the Blackpool conference hall quietly issuing orders to her staff through a radio microphone.

Mrs Stacey, a mother of two, has

worked for the party for ten years, and explains that an understanding of the party is essential to her work. "It is my job to make things look as good as possible," she says. "I don't get involved in policy. I just think about presenting what they come up with in the best way." She denies that Labour has now become the past-master of style without substance. "Everybody knows that if you have not got good policies, the presentation will look like a sham. The presentation is the icing on the cake."

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Adrenalin and kindness create feel-good factor

ATTENDING either as an apparition or an MP I never actually spoke at a Conservative Party conference. I took the view, in any case, that only heroes or lunatics — the ratio of them is a matter for judgment — speak either at Tory conferences or in the 1922 Committee.

At the beginning of this week I didn't know whether I would seek to speak at Blackpool. It seemed important to listen, get a sense of the dynamics of conference and observe what works in speeches and what doesn't. I find it impossible in cold blood to prepare a speech with which I can be happy. Until I can imagine the audience, the political atmosphere, the physical reality, it's all too remote. The stimulus isn't there and the effort is all uphill.

By late on Tuesday night the adrenalin was flowing enough for me to decide to have a go. Conference was kind and I feel good having done it.

I went off at lunchtime to chair the Shelter fringe meeting. It was very well attended, perhaps because of what New Labour might call the uncanny fine weather, perhaps because it's in the folklore that you get a better buffet with Shelter, but in truth simply because it was a Shelter meeting. For 30 years Shelter has been one of those pressure groups that have been remaking our democratic culture. The professionalisation of politics has meant less independence of both thought and utterance on the back benches, and the development of the media has extended the forum decisively beyond the Commons. A campaigning group like Shelter, combining expertise and passion, has ensured that its field of concern remains prominent, and that MPs and journalists have no excuse for ignorance.

At a previous meeting, organised by Demos, I made the point that, while pressure



groups enable us to have a better quality of debate. In the end politics cannot just be the pursuit of single issues to the ultimate. It must be about the reconciliation of interests. It does have to be about hard choices.

It matters very much for our democracy that Labour is able to persuade young people to extend their own political commitment beyond pressure group activity to parliamentary politics. The statistic that haunts me from the last general election is that only 43 per cent of 18-24 year olds voted at all.

An electrifying speech by Barbara Castle was matched by a consummate and courageous speech by Harriet Harman. I think I can imagine Harriet too, in the very distant future, as an elegant old lady subversively holding conference in the palm of her hand.

One MP who has attended more party conferences than anyone should offer me his advice as an old sweat. If you watch the debates on TV in your bedroom, he observed, it's easier to keep up with your laundry. He'd better be careful the red doesn't run from the "Good Old Labour" T-shirts on sale at the Tribune Rally.

Alan Howarth is MP for Stratford-on-Avon

20mph speed limit planned at schools

By JAMES LANDALE

LABOUR is planning a 20 mph speed limit outside schools to improve the safety of children, Andrew Smith, the Shadow Transport Secretary, announced yesterday.

An initiative to set up "safe routes" to schools is also envisaged. Businesses and residents along the route could join a scheme under which they kept an eye on pupils as they went to school. The pedestrianisation of certain streets is also a possibility.

Andrew Smith, the Shadow Transport Secretary, told the Labour conference in Blackpool that he would shortly begin consulting with police, schools and local authorities to see how the plans could be put into practice. Mr Smith hopes the lower speed limit will cut the rising number of accidents involving children outside school.

He also hopes to cut traffic congestion around schools by encouraging parents not to take their children by car. If

the routes are safer, Mr Smith believes parents will feel happier about letting their children go to school unaccompanied, on foot or by bicycle.

Labour will examine "safe routes" run by councils in west London and Leicestershire. The announcement came in Mr Smith's first conference speech as Shadow Transport Secretary. He reaffirmed Labour's commitment to a "publicly owned, publicly accountable" railway and pledged to re-regulate the bus system.

"We will use the formidable powers of the regulator and a publicly-owned British Rail to meet clear goals: to improve the network and to win lots more passengers and freight on to rail," he said. Although there were some calls for a complete reversal of rail privatisation, a motion by the RMT rail union committing Labour to start bringing the railways back into public ownership in its first term of government was not called for debate.

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Even a bold Blair government unlikely to join EMU first wave

The main difference between the parties on Europe is that a majority of Tories regard a single currency primarily as a constitutional question and most on the Labour side see it as an economic one. So for many Tories it is an absolute matter of principle, and for most Labour MPs and trade unionists it is a relative issue of economic advantage. It is almost impossible to envisage a re-elected Tory Government recommending entry. For a Blair Cabinet, the decision would be more one of balance of timing — when, not whether.

The divisions within both parties on Europe are less important than the different way the issue is viewed within them. Of course, many Tories worry about the economic side of EMU and many Labour MPs recognise the constitutional implications. But there is a difference of priorities, of sticking points. Labour takes a different view of sovereignty, not taking an absolutist view of the supremacy of Westminster but believing it can be shared, via devolution and a Bill of Rights. For a large number of Tory MPs, there can never be any compromise on such a basic constitutional principle. These fears are shared by some,

mainly older, Labour MPs such as Peter Shore, Nigel Spearing and Austin Mitchell. For most on the Labour Left, economic arguments are central — though they are concerned about the lack of democratic control over the European Central Bank.

The main worry on the Labour Left is the broadly Keynesian one that monetary union will be too deflationary — that tight targets for inflation and public borrowing will increase unemployment. The Left emphasises real, as opposed

to just financial, convergence. Robin Cook talked on Tuesday about the need to set objectives for unemployment, though the Labour leadership has not wanted to tie its hands with specific job targets.

Most of the Labour Party is now at home in Europe. Labour local authorities look to Brussels for regional grants and trade unions, of course, back the development of European social policies, including the social chapter.

The case for British involve-

ment was presented last week in a pamphlet, *Jobs, Growth and Security*, by 14 MPs headed by Giles Radice, the chairman of the European Movement, but including members across the Labour spectrum. And, at a fringe meeting yesterday, John Monks, General Secretary of the TUC, argued that "on balance, we say go for it — for once let us be in the first wave".

The Labour leadership is more cautious, hoping to stick until after the election to the formula that the decision will depend on the economic conditions at the time. Gordon Brown would like a Labour government to be in a

position to join. If it wanted to do so, he would like the wording in the manifesto to be seen as providing a mandate for such a decision without the need for a referendum which would involve lengthy uncertainty and risks.

But other leaders, including Tony Blair, believe that "the full consent of the people" will require endorsement via either a referendum or a second election. Mr Cook also takes this view and, in addition, is wary of taking such an economic leap until it is clear that EMU works. Hence the view that a Blair government would prob-

bly not join EMU at the start. In any event, so much needs to be done before Britain could enter legislation to end the opt-out, to make the Bank of England operationally independent and to pool reserves — that there is almost a force of inertia against entry in the first wave.

A Blair government would have to act quickly and boldly if it wanted to be in at the start. That now looks unlikely, but it must still be a 30 or 40 per cent chance if Labour has a big enough Commons majority.

PETER RIDDELL

Castle is defeated in battle to win higher pensions

By Jill Sherman, Arthur Leathley and Philip Webster

TONY BLAIR came through his only serious challenge of Labour's conference week last night when Baroness Castle of Blackburn's call for higher spending on pensions was comfortably defeated.

The leadership's determination to be tough on spending was backed as, by a three to two majority, delegates threw out the veteran campaigner's demand for a £3.5 billion package to increase the income of all pensioners. Mr Blair needed the victory to deflect Tory claims that in government Labour's rigour would weaken.

But after two days of negotiations by Mr Blair, Gordon Brown and John Prescott with union leaders and constituency activists, the leadership got its way. The Shadow Chancellor spent yesterday lunchtime trying to win over 100 delegates to his cause.

Lady Castle's defeat came in spite of an emotional conference reception for her as she criticised Harriet Harman, the Shadow Social Security Secretary, and Mr Brown. Attacking the Shadow Chancellor's ambition to cut the rate of tax to 10p for low earners, she said it would not give a penny to the three million pensioners who were too poor to pay income tax.

Lady Castle, 85, used both humour and history to reject the compromise pension review put forward by the national executive and call for a decision before the general election. In a speech that was applauded as much in nostalgia as for its contribution to the debate, she accused "the backroom boys" behind the Labour leadership of being unable to grasp the trickier aspects of pension policy, which she had wrestled with as Employment and Productivity Minister in 1974.

She joked that any applause would eat into the three-minute time slot she was allowed for her contribution. In the event she exceeded her time by at least five minutes.

To rapturous applause she told the Conference: "If we are to have a proper meeting of minds and thrash this out as civilised people, statistic against statistic, then we must have a level playing field. We must ask this platform to withdraw their [policy document] *Security in Retirement*."

Lady Castle called for an immediate review of Labour's pension policy. She insisted that the plan would not be an "orgy of spending".

She mocked suggestions that she might take part in the proposed pensions policy review, but brushed aside accusations that she was rock-

ing the boat when the leadership wanted unity. She said: "I'll tell you one thing, comrade: that debate has put the pensions issue right back in the centre of our policy. That is what we want, that's where it should have been in the first place, not left off the list of a Labour government's five priorities."

Officials were expecting a tight vote, with the result largely in the hands of the constituency delegates, who now make up 50 per cent of the conference vote. Lady Castle was defeated in a card vote.

Winding up the debate, Ms Harman promised that the review would look at the state pension, including the earnings link, the second-tier pension, including Serps and community care. But she gave no firm pledges and there was little indication that the leadership would change its position before the general election.

"We owe it to them not to make promises we know we can't keep and that we know could threaten our chance to help them in government. But what we can promise and deliver is that for the first time in government, pensioners will be listened to directly, their voices heard on the key issues that affect them."

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Lady Castle was well prepared for her fightback. The night before, dressed in a shocking orange jacket, she had led the Tribune rally enthusiastically evoking the name of old heroes such as Nye Bevan and talking about universal rights for pensioners, but Lady Castle, using flaming oratory, was arguing for another era when the likes of Harriet Harman were still wearing dungarees rather than power suits.

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Private schools to chart success with less able pupils

By DAVID CHARTER, EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

The 12,000 11-year-olds and 3,000 13-year-olds expected to join conference schools next September will take the inau-

Carol Fitz-Gibbon, centre director, said: "The test will consist of mathematics, vocabulary and various non-verbal activities, for example, how quickly can you match errors in spelling and symbols."

Cutting edge: Lord Gowrie yesterday, condemning the "Ministry of No"

Gowrie attacks Treasury plan to cut arts grant

By DALYA ALBERGE, ARTS CORRESPONDENT

He said that as the National Lottery was established to cover capital costs rather than running costs, millions of pounds were being spent on new buildings that would become empty shells because the artists inside them would be unable to keep going.

"The outcome will be extremely damaging," she said, adding that galleries were having to raise sponsorship to pay for staff as well as programmes because public funds did not go far enough. She said: "What the Government always said would not happen is happening. Sponsorship is no longer the icing on the cake but the crucial part."

THE
CAT
IS
BACK.



McLaren: set up contest for today's composers

Banker's contest is investment in future of music

BY DALYA ALBERGE

Private donors have made the venture possible and negotiations are under way with sponsors.

Cathy Graham, executive director of the Society for the Promotion of New Music, welcomed the initiative. "People may not like a work after one hearing but they may like it after ten," she said. "Quality work needs more time. This is extremely exciting. Important for really raising the profile of contemporary music. There may be some superb pieces that haven't been discovered yet."

Beneath its skin, the new Jaguar XK8 flexes muscles never seen before. It has 32 valves. It develops 290 bhp. It's the finest

Taleban troops mass for attack on tunnel

TALEBAN Islamic soldiers are massed at the mouth of the strategic Salang Tunnel in northern Afghanistan, waiting in high spirits for the order to march. These are the "holy warriors" who have conquered most of the country in barely two years: they are fired with a sense of invincibility.

A heavy machinegun points into the highway tunnel. Heavy guns stare down from the surrounding Hindu Kush mountains. Just beyond the other end, 1.6 miles away, the forces of General Rashid Dostum, the Uzbek warlord of the north, are waiting. The two sides are locked in negotiations to avoid fighting: if there is war, it will be intense.

Taleban's immediate target is not General Dostum. The dream of these ragged, black-turbaned fighters is to destroy utterly the forces of the Government they ousted from Kabul a week ago.

The vanquished army of Tajiks, led by Ahmed Shah Masood, the military chief of the toppled regime, has retreated to its traditional stronghold in the Panjshir



Christopher Thomas at the Salang tunnel, left, highlights its vital military role in winter, linking north and south Afghanistan

Valley, 30 miles beyond the tunnel to the northeast. Some Taleban forces have swept in a wide arc round the tunnel and have reached the entrance to Panjshir, where skirmishes have already taken place.

Lorryloads of extra Taleban troops poured north along the Salang highway from Kabul yesterday to reinforce the 6,000 men at the tunnel. The delay is agonising for the beleaguered fighters.

The road is littered with the hulks of Russian T-64 tanks, monuments to the victory by American-backed Mujahidin against the Soviet Union, whose last troops left in 1989. Many of those former Mujahidin are now preparing to fight for their lives in the Panjshir. Such are the twists and turns of Afghan conflict.

Mullah Lambat, 35, a Tale-

ban commander at the tunnel, is confident of swift victory over the government forces. "We can defeat them in two days. All we need is the order to go ahead." One day he would lay down his guns, but not until Afghanistan was united under Taleban and faithful to Islam.

Such is Taleban's morale: a far cry from the exhausted, war-weary government soldiers, tens of thousands of whom have abandoned General Masood, whose exploits in the guerrilla war against the Russians are legendary. He captured Kabul in April 1992, only to lose it 52 months later. Now he is fighting to stop his army disintegrating.

Taleban has reinforced its firepower with captured government weapons. The small town of Wolang, two miles

from the tunnel, is being used as a garrison and looks like a bazaar for Kalashnikovs, machineguns, rocket launchers and artillery.

This is bleak country: treeless, waterless and rocky, and already cold at night as winter approaches rapidly. In a month or two the entire area will be under several feet of snow. The Salang highway will then be the only direct link between north and south, making the tunnel a vital military objective.

Taleban soldiers spend their days cleaning weapons, lounging in commandeered houses and fiddling endlessly with walkie-talkies. They are itching to hear the order from Taleban headquarters in the southern city of Kandahar to press on to Panjshir. That will not happen until negotiations

with General Dostum are complete. He is doubtless powerful enough to block their advance and he has the option of blasting the tunnel's northern mouth.



The Salang highway, along which Taleban soldiers travelled before massing at the tunnel's southern mouth

and live in peace or we will attack," said Mullah Lambat, a veteran of the guerrilla war against the Soviet Union. He has spent 17 years at war. His fighters are young, teenagers mostly, all filled with the romance and glory of jihad.

They forget that General Masood, with tonnes of shells and ammunition in his armoury, might spring some

bloody surprises. He has already blocked the road into Panjshir by starting a landslide with explosives. Taleban commanders know he will not be defeated easily, for all the braggadocio of the commanders and the young fighters at the front line.

As talks continue, General Dostum and Taleban are allowing normal traffic through

the tunnel. Lorryloads of melons and onions move south: decrepit buses bring people fleeing possible fighting: old taxis are laden with people and suitcases.

Everybody knows that Afghanistan's seemingly interminable war is moving towards a decisive battle, be it with General Dostum or General Masood, or both.

Palme suspect 'tried to murder Nkomo'

FROM JAN RAATH IN HARARE

ANTHONY WHITE, the former Rhodesian Selous Scout commando alleged to have assassinated Olof Palme, the Swedish Prime Minister, in 1986, is wanted by the authorities in Zimbabwe for questioning over ivory smuggling, and the unexplained removal of his file from the immigration department, police sources said yesterday.

The interest of Zimbabwe's police and national parks departments in Mr White further muddies the background of the marksman and explosives expert named this week by Dirk Coetzee, the South African death squad chief, as Palme's killer. Mr White has denied the claim.

Known to friends as "Ant", Mr White became a lesser Southern African legend in the late 1970s for three alleged attempts to assassinate Joshua Nkomo, then head of a guerrilla movement fighting the Rhodesian Government.

Mr White, it is claimed, was sent to the Zambian capital, Lusaka, on a one-man mission in 1978. Colonel Ron Reid-Daly, commander of the Selous Scouts, wrote in his book, *Top Secret War*, that Mr White's car was so packed with concealed explosives that it resembled "an enormous claymore mine".

Mr White spent five weeks



White: wanted by police in his native Zimbabwe

positioning the car along a route he expected Mr Nkomo to use, intending to detonate it from a safe distance as the nationalist leader passed. But each day Mr Nkomo took a different route and Mr White returned home after Lusaka muggers broke his nose.

In April 1979 Mr White was allegedly part of a commando unit flown to Lusaka twice to launch a military assault on Mr Nkomo's home.

Business associates in the Mozambican port of Beira, where Mr White runs a small factory, say there is no hint that he is involved in anything but his busy hardwood furniture export business. "This is a small town and we know who the con-men and the hoodlums are," said one businessman, who asked not to be named.

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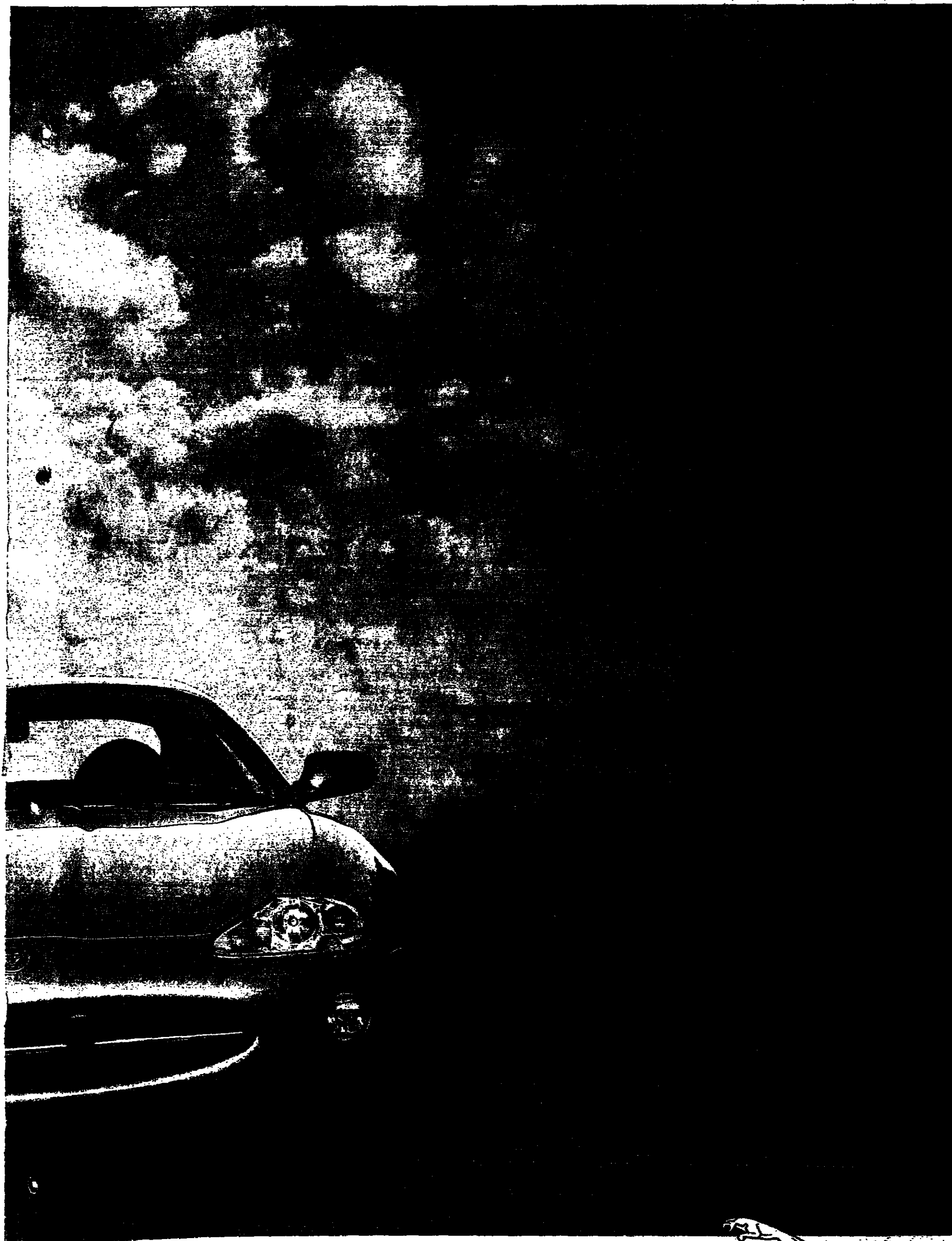
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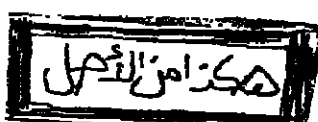
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Nobel old boys' club wins no prize for courage

By Roger Boyes

THE Swedish Academy, which will announce today the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, is a deeply divided club dominated by squabbling professors, lexicologists and introspective writers.

That is the judgement of many Swedish literary critics and some of the academicians themselves. Knut Ahnfeldt, the literary historian, has been boycotting its regular Thursday meetings in protest at its failure to condemn Iran's fatwa against Salman Rushdie, the author of *Satanic Verses*. Three dissidents have condemned its cowardice. Others complain that some members are too closely associated with publishing houses that profit from the award.

The prize, worth 7.4 million Swedish kroner (£705,000), is the world's most coveted award for writers. Yet the decision-making is odd, almost random, compared to the reading marathon and detailed shortlists involved in the Booker Prize.

Of the 18 academicians, six are professors with an apparent preference for Scandinavian writers. The secretary of the academy — its public persona — is Professor Sten Allen, whose main contribution to literature was a computer study of the frequency of the words *in, that, from, how, is* and *the* in the Swedish language.

Dr Allen is an able enough administrator, but he has been the butt of the dissidents with his insistence that the academy must steer clear of political statements, thus abandoning Rushdie's cause. The academy is, in fact, highly political. It is in the middle of an argument with Stockholm city council about controversial traffic-flow plans, and at least one key judge, Kjell Espmark, is a sharp critic of the Swedish social welfare state. His novels often contain veiled attacks on Olof Palme, the late Swedish Prime Minister.

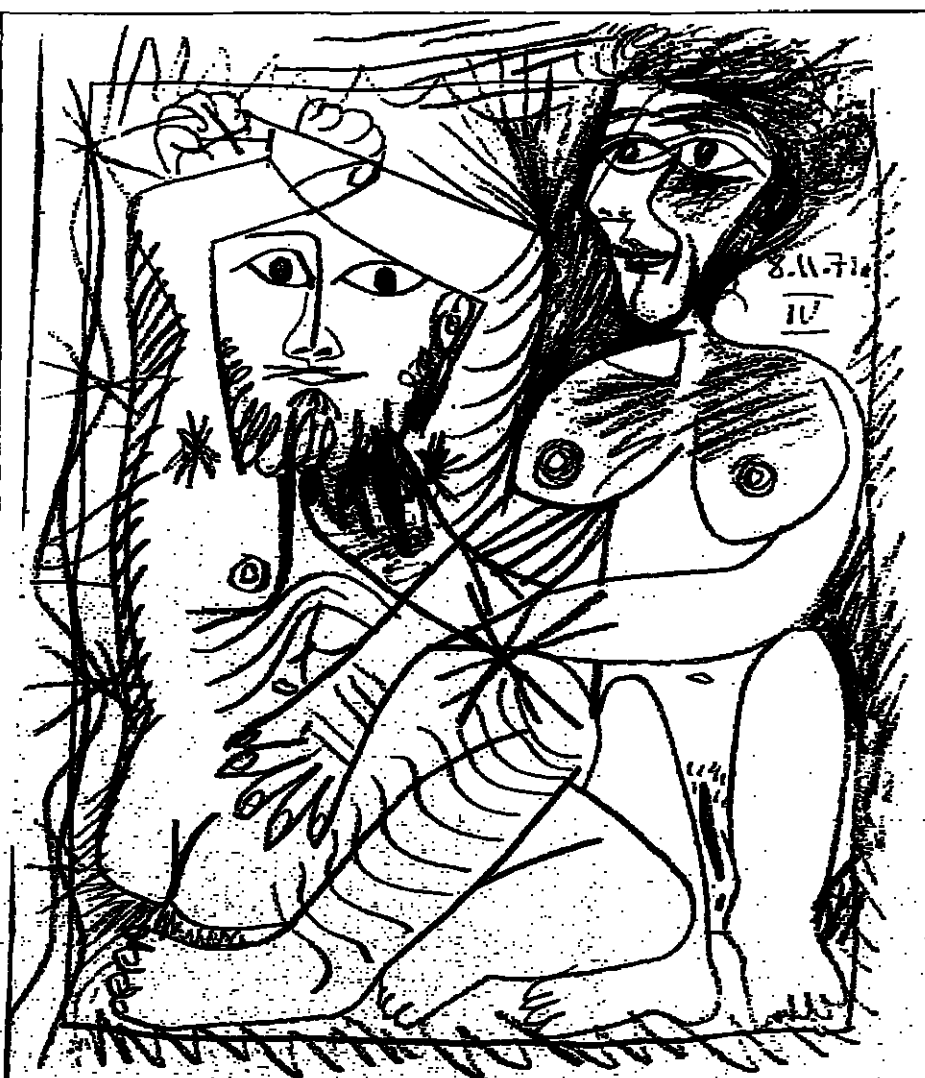
The Chinese favourite to win the prize this year, poet Bei Dao, probably owes his place on the shortlist to Goeran Malmquist, the Sinologist regarded as one of the most dynamic members of the academy. He has been a loud campaigner against the mass killings of pro-democracy protesters in Peking's Tiananmen Square in June 1989.

A study of the academy's past winners, however, suggests that poets are unlikely to be honoured in consecutive years. Last year Seamus Heaney, the Irish poet, won the award.

For the same reason, an English-speaking writer is also unlikely to win this year. This would seem to rule out a surprise victory for Bob Dylan, the rock songwriter and musician, whose name has been put forward by an American professor.

The breakdown of the voting will not be known for 50 years because the academy is almost as jealous of its secrets as the Vatican. The idea is to maintain the traditions of the academy set up in 1785 by King Gustav III. But the effect of so much social conservatism is a preponderance of rather academic judges such as Johannes Edfeldt, 92, whose literary breakthrough came with a novel entitled *High Mass* written in 1934. The average age of the judges is 72, and membership of the academy is assumed to end only on the deathbed.

Stockholm: A group of Russian soldiers' mothers which has campaigned for better conditions in the military was among four winners yesterday of the Right Livelihood Award, Sweden's so-called "alternative Nobel". Other winners were Herman Daly, an American economist, George Vithoulkas, a Greek homeopathic physician, and the Indian group, Science Writers' Forum of Kerala. Mr Daly's award carries no purse; the other three winners share \$250,000 (£160,000). (AP)



Two of the Picasso drawings, among the last works completed by the artist, included in the exhibition opening in Milan today. Experts have rejected doubts over their authenticity

'Kama Sutra' drawings reveal Picasso as lusty nonagenarian

From Richard Owen in Milan

THE organisers of a controversial exhibition of late erotic art by Picasso yesterday dismissed doubts over the authenticity of some of the drawings, saying the collection — the last drawings completed by the artist before his death in 1973, aged 92 — was a "poetic hymn to life".

The drawings go on show today at a newly opened arts centre in a renovated 19th-century palace ad-

joining La Scala theatre in Milan. They are certainly testimony to the triumph of a lust for life over old age. "Picasso was an extraordinary force of nature," *La Repubblica* said. "It was thought everything that could be said about him had been said — but apparently not. This is a vital and unashamed Kama Sutra."

The collection was given by Picasso to his chauffeur, Maurice Bresnu, who in the great painter's final six years became his factotum and confidant. Picasso called him

"Nounours" (roughly, teddy bear). Some art experts have hinted that Bresnu, who died in 1991, took advantage of Picasso in his dotage, knowing that any doodle by the master would have a high value. But witnesses have spoken of the artist's affection for Bresnu and his wife, Jacqueline.

Some of the 105 drawings carry a signature which experts say does not resemble the normal Picasso one. Asked to explain this yesterday, Beniamino Levi, director of the Strat-

ton Foundation of Lugano, which owns the collection, said Bresnu and his wife had continued to live in Picasso's house after his death.

"It is possible — I have no way of knowing, but it is possible — that Jacqueline, say, signed some of the drawings with Picasso's name after his death," Signor Levi said. Jacqueline committed suicide in 1992. "But there is absolutely no question mark over either the provenance or the authenticity of the drawings," Signor Levi said. He said that Picasso did

not normally sign his work except when he was selling it.

The works have been authenticated by Picasso's daughter, Maya, who describes in the catalogue her "intense emotions" on seeing the drawings, which she describes as a mark of her father's "humour and audacity" at the end of his life.

Picasso: The Hidden Collection is open to the public until January 6, 1997, at the Trussardi Foundation Gallery, Marino alla Scala Art Centre, Milan.

Bomb threats to Austrian leaders

From Roger Boyes in Bonn

SECURITY has been stepped up for Austrian and German politicians after threats by a small terrorist group to send letter bombs to eight prominent decision-makers.

According to one report, President Clinton figures on a target list that was sent to a

magazine by a group calling itself the Bajuvarian Liberation Army (BLA), but the main threat is perceived to be against Austrian politicians in the run-up to the elections on October 13 for the European Parliament.

The threats are being taken seriously since the BLA, which wants to reunite the German-speaking peoples of

Bavaria, the Alps and along the Danube — has claimed responsibility for more than 20 letter-bomb attacks in the past three years. All have been directed at foreigners or at prominent people associated with refugee issues, and 11 people have been injured. Franz Vranitzky, the Austrian Chancellor, is among those with extra police protection.

Ballot fraud in Armenia

Warsaw: There were 22,013 too many votes in Armenia's polls won by President Ter-Petrosian, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which monitored the election, said yesterday. He won by 21,941 votes. Most extra votes were in Yerevan, the capital. (AFP)

Nepal offers cows haven

Geneva: A Nepalese Hindu organisation has offered to adopt 230,000 Swiss cows doomed for slaughter amid efforts to eradicate the spread of "mad cow" disease.

In a letter released yesterday, the World Hindu Federation offered to save the condemned animals on condition that the Swiss Government pay it the £165 million it

has set aside for the planned cattle cull. The Kathmandu-based group said that it regarded the slaughtering of cows as a more serious crime than killing anything else.

Last month the Swiss Government decided to kill a third of its beef herd over the next two and a half years to fight BSE and boost beef market prices. (AFP)

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Computer blamed as 70 are killed in Peru jet crash

BY QUENTIN LETTS

ALL seventy people on board a Peruvian jetliner were feared dead after it crashed early yesterday in the Pacific, not far from the capital, Lima.

Mechanical trouble had been reported by the pilot before the accident and conditions were foggy. Aeroperu's Flight 603 disappeared from radio and radar contact at 1.10am local time, almost half an hour after taking off from Lima bound for Santiago, Chile. The pilot said that he was turning back to Lima and requested an emergency landing.

Elsa Carrera de Escalante, the Peruvian Transport Minister, said computer failure appeared to have been the cause. "We have listened to the recordings of the pilot," she said. "It seems there was a

blockage in the computer system."

Navy patrol boats found wreckage from the plane in the sea, 40 miles west of the resort of Ancon, said Admiral Jaime Monge, head of navy rescue operations. Ancon is 42 miles north of Lima.

Emergency rescue workers stood in vain on the Pacific shore, shining lights out to sea in the hope of attracting the attention of survivors. "The only possibility is for survivors to direct themselves towards the light," said Juan Piperes, a spokesman for the local fire brigade.

Visibility was down to 30ft, and in the icy waters of the Humboldt current, which flows up the Peruvian coast from Antarctica, no survivors were expected. Some lights

from the plane itself and a sheen of oil were said to have been seen on the surface of the sea by naval and police helicopters.

A local fisherman, Jesus Herrera, reported hearing a noise in the night. Soon afterwards his beach shack was flooded by a large wave.

The aircraft was a comparatively new Boeing 757, thought to have been leased from Aeroperu's Mexican parent company. It was the third recent air disaster to involve a jet of this type.

The plane, which had a capacity of 180 people, was carrying 61 passengers and a crew of nine. The nationality of those on board was not immediately known, an official at Aeroperu's Manhattan offices said, but television reports stated that four of the missing were Americans.

Flight 603 originated in New York before stopping at Miami. Passengers changed planes at Lima.

The jet took off from Lima at 12.42am and the pilot reported mechanical difficulties about five minutes later, according to early reports.

The crash was the first in the history of Aeroperu, which was founded in the early 1970s and is a private company. It was originally government-owned.



Sally Gummell with Hadelino Isidro, 11, at Kuito, where she met landmine victims



Gummell winces as a mine is destroyed

Track star backs ban on mines

FROM ADRIAN BROOKS
IN HUAMBO, ANGOLA

ONE wrong step and a sporting career could have been ruined. For Sally Gummell, the former Olympic 400m champion and the latest recruit to an international campaign to ban landmines, witnessing the crippling effects of the weapon of war in Angola was nerve-racking.

Last week she was led through a minefield to watch a controlled explosion. She said: "You only had to put one foot wrong. Five days ago, I didn't even know what a mine looked like or the terrible injuries they can inflict." Earlier, she had toured the Médecins sans Frontières hospital in Kuito, where she met mine victims. Gummell's visit was part of the campaign to outlaw mines. Today a conference devoted to the issue opens in Ottawa.

Murder adds to Korean tension

FROM THOMAS DE WAAL
IN MOSCOW AND
ROBERT WEYMANT IN TOKYO

SOUTH KOREA tentatively pointed the finger at North Korea for the murder of its consul to Vladivostok yesterday, straining further relations between the two countries, already at their worst for several years.

The body of Choi Duck Keun was found on Tuesday night on the staircase of his apartment block in the Russian city. He had been bludgeoned on the back of the head and his stomach had been slit.

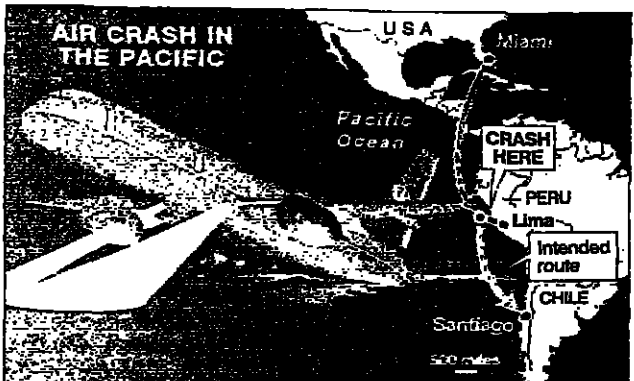
Gangs are in a perpetual state of war in the mafia-ridden eastern city and police refused to comment on yet another killing. But the consul's murder was unlikely to be a simple mugging as his wailer and passport had not been taken.

A South Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman acknowledged Mr Choi had been in charge of intelligence gathering on North Korea, making him an obvious target. "We can't rule out the possibility that North Korea could be involved," he said. Seoul is sending investigators to work with Russian police.

In the past two weeks, the Koreans have been embroiled in one of their worst confrontations for years after the landing of spies from a North Korean submarine in the South. Twenty-two North Koreans from the vessel have since been killed.

North Korean army officers threatened their southern neighbours at a meeting at the truce village of Panmunjom yesterday, saying "that serious consequences which would be announced would occur as a result of the deaths of their soldiers", a United Nations spokesman said. Lee Yang Ho, the South Korean Defence Minister, said Seoul might have to gird itself for war.

The submarine incident and the murder have caused alarm and raised questions about how long the 43-year stalemate, a result of the Korean War, can continue.



Patten challenges China to safeguard Hong Kong's freedoms

FROM JONATHAN MIRSKY
IN HONG KONG

CHRIS PATTEN, Hong Kong's twenty-eighth and last Governor, yesterday gave a challenging final policy address to the Legislative Council. Peking will appoint its own council in 1997 and Mr Patten's vision of Hong Kong's future was bleak. He laid down 16 "benchmarks" by which it will be judged internationally under Chinese rule. Freedom of the press and

assembly and an "openly elected legislature", for example, are likely to be explosive issues once the colony is handed over.

The Governor said Hong Kong's strength to date stemmed from the "hard work and skill of its Chinese men and women", but also of British "stewardship" which had brought the rule of law, a meritocratic Civil Service, and the openness to ideas and people that "lies at the heart of Hong Kong's success". Mr Patten said that during the final

nine months of British rule the Government was not "going into hibernation... we still have plenty to do", but he soon issued sombre warnings. If things went well in Hong Kong, he said, they would make China's problems lighter. "And the reverse is true," he said.

The relationship between China and Hong Kong, which he said would soon be the richest Chinese city, "goes to the heart of what sort of country China is in the next century and how it plays its role in

the region and the world". The colony seemed to be "a superb meteor... rather than a sleepy and permanent planet".

He saved his direst warnings for the Legislative Council (LegCo), whose election last year lies at the core of Peking's hatred of the Governor and of the crisis in Sino-British relations since he was appointed in 1992. Peking claims that the council violated treaty agreements between the British and Chinese, and vows to replace it

next year by a body handpicked by China. That "provisional LegCo" will legislate in competition with the existing council.

For the first time, Mr Patten came close yesterday to saying that such a body would be illegal. He declared: "The role of this institution, its credibility and legitimacy, lies at the heart of wider doubts about the future of pluralism and freedom in Hong Kong."

The present elected council, he said, "has been and will remain a

potent symbol of what sort of society Hong Kong is today and could and would be tomorrow".

Mr Patten's other "benchmarks" seem equally ominous. These include a free press, freedom of assembly, vigils and demonstrations. Chinese officials have said, however, that certain opinions will be regarded as seditious and it intends to abridge Hong Kong's Bill of Rights.

Leading article, page 21

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Palestinians fear tank onslaught as Israelis dig in

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN JERUSALEM

THE Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, home to 2.2 million Palestinians, resembled a war zone last night with security forces on both sides on alert in anticipation of renewed violence in reaction to the Washington summit.

Some Palestinians were sand-bagging their homes in fear of an attack by Israeli tanks. Senior Palestinian officials said that many families were hoarding food in case the failure of the Washington talks to meet expectations sparked more serious clashes than those which left more than 70 people dead and nearly 1,500 wounded last week.

"There is an atmosphere of fear. We are living in a very critical situation," said a senior official in the autonomous West Bank town of Kalkilya, where residents were protecting their homes with sandbags. "If the tanks enter the city, big losses will take place."

Even before the summit results had been announced, Israeli and Palestinian security sources reported that one Palestinian had been shot dead by Israeli troops in Hebron, the tense city at the centre of the Washington talks, and five others were wounded during two incidents in the West Bank.

Israeli military commanders emphasised that they would not hesitate to use tanks, snipers and Cobra attack helicopters to put down any new armed assaults on their troops or Jewish settlers.

Members of the 30,000-strong Palestinian police were digging new trenches close to Israeli lines around Nablus, the largest West Bank city. Palestinians said factories were working at only 30 per cent capacity because workers from surrounding areas were kept out by Israeli roadblocks.

The Israeli forces, already reinforced by thousands of

men, appeared to be digging in for the long haul. The army was reported to have placed an emergency order for hundreds of special bullet-proof vests from England and armoured protection was being sent to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where Palestinian residents are under effective "town arrest".

Major-General Amiaz Sagis, the chief of the technology and logistics branch, said: "We are preparing for an extended stay. The winter is at the doorstep and we are readying ourselves for it."

In Hebron, Palestinians pelted the Israelis with stones the minute a week-long curfew on the 100,000 Arab inhabitants was lifted briefly to let people buy food. "All leaders are liars," said nine-year-old Mahran Natche, one of the stone-throwers. "We will never live in peace with the Jews". As night fell, there were also reports that stones had been



Israeli guards check the identity of a Palestinian in Hebron, during a curfew in the West Bank town yesterday

hurled at Israeli soldiers in Bethlehem but Palestinian police, acting on orders from Yasser Arafat, the President of the Palestinian Authority, intervened.

A report in *Haaretz*, a Tel Aviv newspaper, by Zeev Schiff, Israel's top military analyst disclosed that the Palestinians are believed by Israeli security sources to have 40,000 weapons in the West Bank and Gaza, a much larger total than previously thought. The arsenal includes AK47 assault rifles and Israeli firearms, either stolen from the Israeli Army over the 27 years of occupation or smuggled in as a result of trading with the

Israeli underworld. Mr Schiff wrote: "According to the Oslo peace agreement, the Palestinian Authority was supposed to collect weapons from civilian hands or register them for use by authorised civilians. The PA did not carry out this part of the agreement."

Such was the tension in an around the six Palestinian towns in the West Bank already handed over to Palestinian control that joint Israeli-Palestinian controls were

suspended. "In some cases, the Palestinian police took part in the shooting at Israel," said Major-General Uzi Dayan, the head of Israel's Central Command.

Hanan Ashrawi, the leading Palestinian spokeswoman, said: "If this summit fails we will face bad consequences," as gloomy reports of progress in Washington spread through the region. "Our people do not expect much from the summit."

Clinton gets into a knot over ties

BY CHRISTOPHER WALKER

THE sartorial habits of Natan Sharansky, a key member of the Israeli summit team, raised eyebrows in the White House according to *Maariv*, the Tel Aviv newspaper.

The paper said President Clinton asked the former Soviet dissident, now Trade and Industry Minister, why he had come to the White House without wearing a tie. Mr Sharansky responded without batting an eyelid: "There is a law in Israel, according to which anyone who was incarcerated in a Russian prison for longer than eight years is exempt from putting on a tie." Mr Sharansky had been a guest of the former Soviet gulag for ten years.

Maariv said Mr Clinton smiled at the response. Later, when he bumped into the former inmate of Moscow's Lefortovo prison, he again asked Mr Sharansky whether it was his habit to go around without a tie. The minister said it was and "the two shook hands warmly".

Diplomats said that in the past it was normal for Israeli officials not to bother with a jacket or tie. But now, under the snappily attired leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu, the tieless member of the Cabinet is the exception rather than the rule.

Simpson case detective charged with perjury

FROM GILES WHITTALL IN LOS ANGELES

MARK FUHRMAN, the detective whose record of racism sabotaged the prosecution of O. J. Simpson, is to be charged with perjury for denying during the Simpson trial that he had used the word "nigger" in the previous ten years. The detective, now an apprentice electrician, was due to be arraigned in Los Angeles yesterday within hours of his perjury charge being made public.

Testifying before a packed Simpson courtroom in March last year, he swore that he had not addressed or spoken of black people as "niggers" in

ten years. Later in the trial, however, a screenwriter who had interviewed Mr Fuhrman submitted tapes on which he used the inflammatory word no fewer than 41 times.

Mr Fuhrman had described on the witness stand finding a crucial bloody glove in Mr Simpson's grounds early on the morning after the murders of Nicole Brown and Ronald Goldman.

The revelation of his casual racist rhetoric, before a largely black jury, turned a key prosecution witness into a godsend for Mr Simpson's successful defence team.

Secret report 'shows tobacco conspiracy'

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

AN AMERICAN congressman has uncovered research by two Britons 32 years ago that he claims is a "smoking gun" to support allegations of a conspiracy among US tobacco manufacturers to hide the dangers of cigarettes.

Martin Meehan, the Massachusetts Democrat and catalyst of a current inquiry into the \$50 billion American tobacco industry, has offered the secret report to the Justice Department as evidence for a federal investigation.

Sir Philip Rogers and Geoffrey Todd, both now dead, were senior members of the

British Research Council who were granted unparalleled access to tobacco executives during a fact-finding mission lasting just over a month.

They revealed that lawyers for cigarette manufacturers assumed control of smoking and health research and concentrated efforts on fighting lawsuits rather than developing safer products.

Michael York, a lawyer for Philip Morris USA, said lawyers worked together all the time to co-ordinate defences and strategy. He called Mr Meehan's allegations "an act of desperation".

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'Club Med' row threatens EU talks

FROM CHARLES BREMNER IN BRUSSELS AND BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

A BOUT of squabbling between France and Italy heightened concern yesterday that a special European summit this weekend could highlight discord among member states as they strive to design a more coherent, streamlined Union.

While EU leaders shuttled around capitals before Saturday's gathering in Dublin, President Chirac of France made little effort to smooth Italian feuds, severely ruffled by an undiplomatic swipe at Rome over its chances of qualifying for monetary union.

The Gaullist President's outburst on Tuesday was seen as a foretaste of the blunt tactics which his aides say he is planning to employ when the leaders take stock of the limping negotiations to revise the Maastricht treaty.

Only M Chirac wanted the Dublin gathering, John Major, Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, and others argued

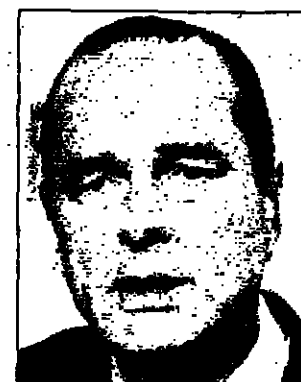
that the informal session risked airing differences while the 15 states remained far apart on ways of revamping the EU to accommodate up to a dozen new members from the East and the South.

Although no formal decisions are due to be made on Saturday, there are also fears that Mr Major could use the gathering at Dublin Castle to restate Britain's resistance to deeper integration three days before the Conservative Party conference. Britain's imminent general election is blamed by the other Union members for the failure of the inter-governmental conference (IGC) to make headway.

M Chirac's remarks on the lira spurred Professor Romano Prodi, the Italian Prime Minister, to threaten to call off talks with M Chirac in Naples today. The French President responded by saying he "ardently hoped" Italy would be



Prodi: warning about cancelling Naples talks



Chirac: only EU leader to want Dublin meeting

among the founder members of economic and monetary union (EMU) but the lira must first "catch up" with the franc.

M Chirac praised the austere Italian budget and said the diplomatic row was simply a "misunderstanding", but his testy warning was reaffirmed yesterday by Catherine Colonna, his spokeswoman, who said Italy's ability to join monetary union depended

partly on an early return to the European exchange-rate mechanism (ERM) at a more appropriate rate.

Mime Colonna said the Italian currency had depreciated by 40 per cent against the franc since Italy was ejected from the ERM in 1992, and the cheap lira was seriously damaging French industry. "The movement of the lira in the past year is positive, but it is

no secret that we think there is still room for appreciation," she said.

Signor Prodi was in no mood for a fresh quarrel with M Chirac since he had already fallen out this week with Jose Maria Aznar, the Spanish Prime Minister, who suggested he had tried to soften the EMU criteria. Signor Prodi denied this yesterday.

The bickering among the "Club Med" states underlined the way in which tension over the push for monetary union is eclipsing the effort to finish a new look Maastricht treaty next June. As the leap to the single currency has acquired the feel of certainty in recent weeks, governments have scrambled to enact draconian budgets for fear of being left on the sidelines when the EMU entrance test is applied in about 18 months' time.

Herr Kohl and M Chirac will be uniting in Dublin to warn colleagues of the dangers of letting the Maastricht review stagnate at a time

when European citizens are taking a more jaundiced view than ever of the Union and its grand monetary scheme. The two "moans" nations are keen to set the pace on such issues as the creation of a stronger EU foreign policy machine and the centralising of control over immigration and crime. Bonn and Paris have not settled a joint package, but France has watered down its demand for the creation of a foreign policy supreme to act as "Mr Europe".

The two have upset the European Commission and federal-minded states by backing a strengthened policy team in Brussels that would report to the member states, leaving control firmly in government hands. The scheme should be acceptable to Britain.

Wide differences remain, however, on extending majority voting. While Britain flatly opposes any dilution of the veto, France, Germany and other states are reluctant to reveal their hands.



Alain Juppé addresses parliament before yesterday's confidence vote on his spending cuts. The French Prime Minister won comfortably

Juppé wins backing for austerity

BY BEN MACINTYRE

THE French parliament passed a vote of confidence in the Government yesterday against a background of renewed internal criticism aimed at Alain Juppé, the Prime Minister, and rumours of a possible early election.

The ruling coalition enjoys a four-fifths majority in the National Assembly and the outcome of the confidence vote, by 464 to 100, was never in doubt, but a fresh burst of sniping from M Juppé's coalition partners suggested that yesterday's seal of approval was rather less than the sincere and frank support in heart and spirit requested by the

Prime Minister. "1997 will be a year of improvement... perseverance will pay off," he assured MPs as he defended austerity policies aimed at reducing the deficit in time for European monetary union.

M Juppé received a standing ovation from a majority of MPs as he called for the third confidence vote since the Government was elected in May last year. But internal strife within the Centre-Right coalition has prompted reports that President Chirac is considering whether to dissolve parliament and call an early election rather than wait until scheduled elections in March 1998 and face the possibility of sharing power with the Left.

During the summer the President discussed the possibility of bringing the election forward with François Léotard, head of the UDF, the Gaullists' junior coalition partner. Le Monde reported yesterday. Last July, M Chirac appeared to rule out an early election, saying that such a decision would be taken only in the event of a big political crisis, but with unemployment rising, strike threats growing and the Government's popularity dwindling, rumours of a possible snap election have begun to circulate.

The opposition Socialists have yet to form a credible election platform and an early poll might ensure M Chirac a

continued parliamentary majority, albeit substantially reduced, for the rest of his seven-year term.

The talk of dissolving parliament may be a way to enforce discipline among rebellious MPs within the ruling coalition, but yesterday Jean-Claude Gaudin, the Minister for Regional Development, said that the coalition should be prepared for such an eventuality. "If it takes place early, that is all the more reason for us first to be ready, second to be determined and third to be united," M Gaudin said in a radio interview.

M Juppé's approval rating has sunk to 30 per cent, according to the latest polls,

only slightly above the record lows of last winter. The Prime Minister has faced a wave of internal criticism over his recent initiatives to bolster anti-racist legislation and tinker with voting rules by adding an element of proportional representation.

During last week's stormy Gaullist conference, President Chirac personally intervened to shield his Prime Minister against increasingly vitriolic attacks from members of his own party.

Just hours before yesterday's confidence vote, Gilles de Robien, floor leader of the UDF, criticised M Juppé's failure to communicate with his coalition partners.

WORLD SUMMARY

Lawyer in massacre trial quits

Sydney: The lawyer representing Martin Bryant, charged with killing 35 people in Port Arthur, Hobart, in April, has abruptly resigned from the case (Rachel Bridge writes).

The departure of David Gunson came two days after Mr Bryant pleaded not guilty to all 72 charges against him, including murder, attempted murder, wounding and arson. It is believed Mr Gunson quit because Mr Bryant did not plead as advised. A second lawyer, John Avery, is considering taking over the defence in the trial which is to resume on November 19.

Kruger Park hit by bushfire

Johannesburg: A quarter of South Africa's Kruger National Park — more than 12 million acres — has been devastated by the worst bushfire in the game reserve for 40 years (Inigo Gilmore writes). Officials said animals had died but tourists had not been in danger. Several fires, started by lightning strikes last week, were brought under control but flared up and ran out of control.

Suu Kyi says 800 detained

Rangoon: Aung San Suu Kyi, the Burmese opposition leader, defied government attempts to gag her, slipping past police barricades barring access to her home and telling reporters that up to 800 democracy activists had been arrested. The ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council earlier admitted that it had detained 559 people in the past week. (Reuters)

Six die in Genoa tanker blaze

Rome: Six workers were killed and three others were injured when fire swept through a giant new Italian methane gas tanker off the port of Genoa in northern Italy. Helicopters and ladders ferried firemen to the blazing tanker but it was several hours before the fire was brought under control. There were 188 people on the ship at the time. (AFP)

Pair jailed for tapping phone

New York: Spanish photographer Carlos H. Arriazu Sanchez, 24, and Carlos Fernandez, 42, a private detective from Miami, were sentenced to six months' jail for tapping the telephone of Giselle "Gigi" Howard, an ex-model linked romantically to Prince Felipe, heir to Spain's throne. (AP)

Cashing in on making waves

Taipei: A Taiwanese travel agency hopes to make the most of a territorial dispute embroiling Taipei, Tokyo and Peking by offering a luxury cruise to the group of deserted islands, known to Chinese as the Diaoyu, in the East China Sea, the United Evening News reported. (Reuters)

Inklings of wrong

Munich: Bavarian regional police arrested an electrician and a mechanic who are suspected of secretly making and trying to sell 0.22 calibre firearms that were disguised as ballpoint pens. (AFP)

Adriatic blockade called off

FROM ASSOCIATED PRESS IN BRUSSELS

NATO and the Western European Union ended their naval blockade in the Adriatic yesterday after the United Nations Security Council's vote to lift trade sanctions against Serbia-led Yugoslavia.

The WEU also announced that it was ending its policing operation to prevent sanctions-busters reaching Serbia by the Danube.

The sanctions enforcement mission had been suspended in June when the UN ended its arms embargo against all the former Yugoslav republics.

In a joint statement, Nato and the WEU said their vessels had challenged 74,000 ships since the mission, code-named Operation Sharp Guard, started in 1993. Six ships were caught trying to break the sanctions.

"Nato and the WEU consider this operation a success, since no ships have been reported as having broken the embargo," the statement said.

The Security Council voted unanimously on Tuesday to lift sanctions as a sign of international recognition of Serbia's role in helping to bring peace to the Balkans.

The mission was the first joint operation between Nato and the WEU, fledgling defence arm of the European Union. The statement said both bodies thought it "served as a positive demonstration of strengthening ties and intensifying co-operation".

Bulgarian plea for calm after murder of top politician

BY JAMES PETTIFER AND OUR FOREIGN STAFF

ANDREI LUKANOV, the former Bulgarian Prime Minister and Socialist deputy, was murdered at his Sofia house yesterday in a mafia-style killing that will add to the feverish political atmosphere in the run-up to presidential elections on October 27.

In a scene reminiscent of the legendary and numerous assassinations of Bulgarian leaders earlier this century, a middle-aged man fired two shots at Mr Lukanov, 58, at about 9.30am — one to the head, the other to the heart. He died about 20 minutes later in a pool of blood on the front doorstep of his Lakatnik Street home.

Parliament appealed for calm, saying the elections would take place as planned, and armed police shut main roads linking the Bulgarian capital with frontier checkpoints, witnesses said.

Police removed the body for a forensic science examination, the state radio reported, adding that Aleksandr Avdeyev, Russia's Ambassador to Sofia, had visited the scene and talked to investigators.

Dimitar Vladimirov, the National Security Service chief, told journalists that Mr Lukanov had been under his unit's protection from February until April after he was threatened. The protection ended after an "investigation clarified the case", he said.

In a joint resolution all

parliamentary groups and independent deputies condemned "categorically" the killing of Mr Lukanov, a deputy of the ruling Socialist Party, which is made up of former Communists.

The resolution, read in the chamber by Blagovest Sendov, the Speaker, said: "We appeal to all Bulgarian citizens to keep calm and together with us guarantee the constitutional order. We will not allow this terrorist act to lead to declaring a state of emergency in Bulgaria."

Mr Sendov called a day of mourning for tomorrow.

Mr Lukanov, an economist, was a leader of the Gorbachev-oriented reform Communists who overthrew Todor Zhivkov, the party chief, in a Politburo coup in November 1989. He became Prime Minister after winning the first post-Communist elections in February 1990.

Born and educated in Moscow, where his father was a senior Bulgarian official, he was a warm, intelligent, cultured man who spoke several languages. Widely seen in Sofia as Russia's man in the inner circle of the political elite, he was a close friend of Viktor Chernomyrdin, the Russian Prime Minister.

As yet no one has claimed responsibility for the killing, but it is likely to be part of the increasingly lethal mafia and politics mixture in Sofia.

Legacy of prayer is treasure on earth

Hamburg: A Spanish businessman and devout Roman Catholic who stopped to pray at a church during a trip to Stockholm ended up a millionaire, Bild reported yesterday.

The church was empty except for a coffin containing the remains of a man, so 35-year-old Eduardo Sierra knelt down and prayed for 20 minutes, counting off the beads on his rosary, the paper said.

Senior Sierra signed a condolence book placed by the coffin after he saw a note

saying those who prayed for the dead man should enter their names and addresses. He noticed that he was the first one to sign.

Several weeks later, Señor Sierra got a call from the Swedish capital informing him that he had inherited the fortune of the dead man, Jens Svenson, a 73-year-old property dealer with no close relatives.

Mr Svenson had specified in his will that "whoever prays for my soul gets all my belongings", Bild reported.

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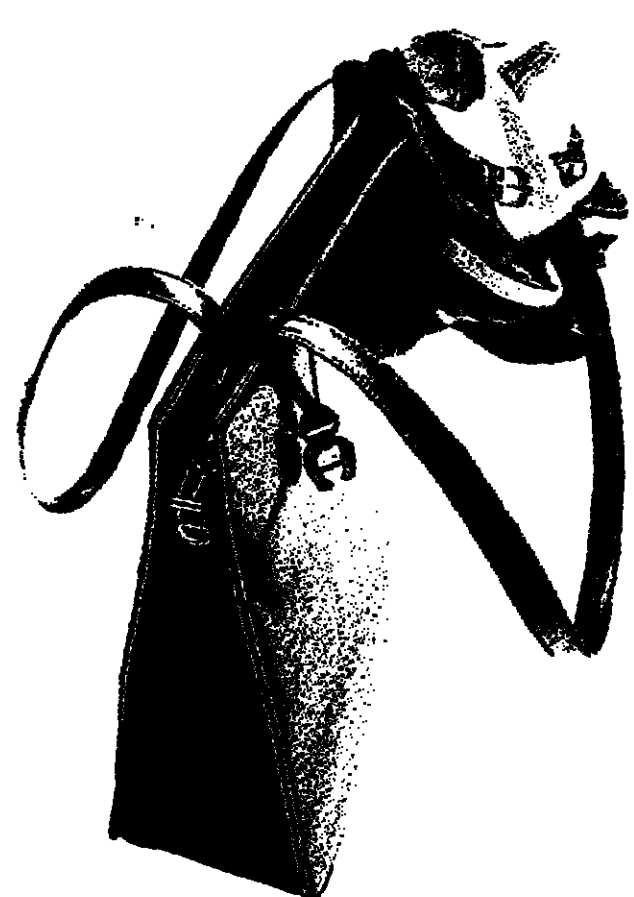
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Dr Thomas Stuttford on an important new report into chronic fatigue syndrome; the tragic inevitability of the Allwood story; the danger of a 'hidden' aortic aneurism; how to help old people in the cold of the Highlands; a new drug to lower blood pressure

The truth at last about ME

Waiting in the council chamber of the Royal College of Physicians for the verdict on myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME), more accurately known as chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), was as nerve-racking as being in court when the jury is out and one of my patients is on trial.

On this occasion, the suspense was even greater because I felt that it was as if the great and good of the colleges of physicians, psychiatrists and general practitioners were the jury and I, after my confrontation with the ME Association on the Esther Rantzen programme, was in the dock.

Doctors always worry about peer review and I couldn't have felt more apprehensive than I did as I drank my morning coffee. In fact, the inquiry had been set up in response to a request from the Chief Medical Officer, and not as a result of any controversy stimulated by the media.

The Royal College's authoritative view, reached after an exhaustive inquiry, aims to dispel popular myths which have built up around CFS. Fortunately, their report seems to support the opinions I had expressed in the less detached environment of the television studio during Ms Rantzen's show.

My opinion, the result of many years of medical practice, much of it with young

adults, is shared by 75 per cent of British doctors, according to an independent poll commissioned by the BBC.

The question which has been intriguing doctors, since it has been known that the commission was inquiring into CFS, was whether the Royal College's research would support the ME Association in its belief that there is a specific organic cause for the persistent troubles which afflict its members. There has been a continuing belief that perhaps it was only the intransigence of traditional doctors which stopped the responsible pathological process from being found and treated.

Or would the Royal College favour the view that CFS is not a specific disease with demonstrable pathological signs, but is more a collection of symptoms in which abnormal fatigue is predominant? The report is well balanced, unemotional and does not try to give the definitive answer as to whether the basis of CFS is psychiatric or physical, but rather tries to give priority to the plight of the patients who suffer from it, and looks for an agreed way to treat them.

Whatever the persistent underlying disease process, it is agreed that a wide variety of situations, ranging from glandular fever to anxiety and other manifestations of stress, can trigger an attack. The Royal College's research has shown that half of the patients

with CFS show signs of affective disorder (depression) and another quarter of other psychiatric diseases.

In other patients the obvious psychiatric link is absent but the report does not take into account family history. Depression and anxiety represent the strongest risk factors so far identified for the likelihood of developing CFS.

The report suggests that these statistics are relevant, cannot be ignored and cannot be taken into account as over 20 well conducted studies into CFS have produced very consistent results.

The Royal College's report emphasises the impact of insomnia, from which many patients with CFS suffer. It is possible that this insomnia, together with the lifestyle which patients with CFS lead, could cause the physical changes which have been recorded in these patients, albeit that there is inconsistent and conflicting evidence about these results.

The Royal College rejects the term ME as being inaccurate and misleading. As far as treatment is concerned, the report places particular emphasis on the need for the doctor to accept his patient's distress, but they are concerned that many of the treatments which have been so fiercely advocated are unproven, and may even be dangerous.



Esther Rantzen hosted the meeting between the ME Association and Dr Stuttford

A tragedy that was inevitable

Mandy Allwood has lost all her eight babies. Once she and her partner rejected the medical advice to have foetal reduction, this tragically became inevitable. But what has been surprising has been the accuracy of the predictions made by obstetricians about the time that the pregnancy would end.

One expert suggested to me that Mandy would go into labour, just as she has done, at about the 20th week. The blood supply to the uterus is capable of supporting the expanding uterus and its contents only up to a certain size. If this is exceeded, labour, and, or, foetal death is to be expected.

As photographs have shown, Mandy's abdomen was already larger than that of a woman who is having a single baby at term.

Multiple pregnancies increase all the risks of complications in a pregnancy and delivery, and in consequence an over-distended uterus is more likely to bleed after delivery.

In Mandy's case, there is also an increased chance of the uterus and its contents becoming infected as she has suffered a prolonged labour—the first of the eight babies was

delivered nearly 48 hours ago and since then the uterus has been very vulnerable to infection.

This vulnerability is increased by the amount of medical interference which is always necessary in complicated cases. Care will now have to be taken to avoid a deep-vein thrombosis and with it the possibility of a pulmonary embolus.

Although Mandy has miscarried comparatively early in her pregnancy, she will have exactly the same troubles caused by breast engorgement and lactation as she would have had if she had been delivered at the normal time.

Most women who have still births suffer the normal grief response of a bereavement. This will be heightened by the hormonal changes which follow any pregnancy, but it is naturally greater in multiple pregnancies.

At once stage of the grief response it is usual for the sufferer to blame either themselves, their families or their doctors. As Mandy disregarded medical advice, her sense of loss, guilt and anger may be particularly acute, and she will need all the support she can get from her partner, family, friends and the medical services.

Helping the aged in the far North

Dunrobin Castle is the most northerly of Scotland's great castles and it has been the home of the Earls of Sutherland since 1235.

This weekend Lord Strathnaver, the present incumbent, is allowing the castle to be the venue for a conference on the medical aspects of life for older patients in the Highlands.

The conference, organised by Help the Aged and the North of Scotland Institute of Postgraduate Medicine, will concentrate on the difficulties older people experience when living in villages or houses whose very isolation, coupled with the sometimes harsh Scottish weather, makes regular contact with their family doctors difficult.

Among the subjects which delegates to the conference will discuss is hypothermia—particularly in relation to nutrition in the older person.

Very often the diet of elderly people is not as good as it should be and experience and research have shown that being adequately nourished is an important factor if hypothermia is to be avoided.

SECTION 2

Artist Peter Blake plays with the Old Masters
Arts, pages 35 to 37

A balloon that can become a time-bomb

Alan Percival, Professor of Clinical Bacteriology at the University of Liverpool, was his usual ebullient self at the annual dinner of the Bransford Society in Oxford last weekend.

If his wife had not paid attention to Professor Percival's health, the story might have been very different. Alan Percival was troubled last year with a slightly raised blood sugar, but any signs of diabetes were soon dispelled by dieting. Even so, Mrs Percival suggested that the time had come when her husband should have a general medical examination.

Professor Percival had no symptoms of any sort and felt well, but in order to preserve the marital harmony agreed to a health check.

Professor Percival had never examined his own abdomen with any great care, so he was surprised when a routine ultrasound of it showed that his aorta, the main artery leading from the heart, had an aneurism.

An aneurism is a ballooning out of the arterial wall and, like any balloon if it becomes over-distended, can burst. If this is the case in an aortic aneurism it may well produce a painful and dramatic death. Alan Percival's aneurism was 5cm in diameter—the girth at which the risk of rupture becomes greater than the risk of surgery.

As soon as the diagnosis had been made, bathtime was not the same for the professor; for as he lay soaking in the water he became conscious of, and could feel, the pulsating swelling in his abdomen which beat in time to his heart. Professor Percival felt as if he was living with an unexploded bomb buried within him.

Professor Percival is one of the country's greatest experts on antibiotic-resistant hospital infections, but even the risk of being infected with one of the organisms he has spent a lifetime studying did not discourage him from seeking immediate surgery.

All went well, the professor had an uneventful operation and now has a piece of artificial aorta grafted into his natural one. He is again playing golf and working hard at reducing his handicap to 15. After surgery a patient can look forward to a life expectancy very little different from other people of his age group.

Screening for aortic aneurisms is recommended in middle age for those people who have close relatives who have suffered from an aneurism, in those who have high blood pressure, in diabetic patients and in people who have had an amputation.

Doctors' opinions differ as to the optimum age at which an ultrasound should be ordered, but only this month a 50-year-old patient of mine whose father had an aneurism, and who is symptom-free, was shown to have one.

Recently there has been a report of a large Finnish survey which has demonstrated the importance of also ultrasounding the abdomens of the brothers and sisters of patients with aneurisms.

In the Finnish study, reported in the *European Journal of Surgery*, the siblings of 200 patients with symptom-free aortic aneurisms were examined. Thirteen of the siblings, ten men and three women, also had unsuspected aneurisms which will now either need careful supervision or immediate surgery.

Easier way to ease pressure

More than the patients who are known to have a high blood pressure are inadequately treated, and therefore quite unnecessarily running an increased risk of suffering either a stroke, heart attack or kidney disease. Often an apparent lack of care is not the fault of the doctor, but is the patient's response to the unpleasant side-effects of the present drugs used in treatment.

Recently Cozart (losartan), a new drug to lower blood pressure, has been introduced by the pharmaceutical firm MSD. It is claimed that research has shown that the side-effects experienced by patients taking Cozart are no more numerous than those reported by the people given a placebo. Despite its apparent innocuousness, Cozart is as effective as existing drugs. The only complications noticed by patients taking Cozart are that very occasionally they cause dizziness, and, even more rarely, a rash.

The manufacturers warn that care is needed if Cozart is prescribed for patients with liver or kidney disease. The tablets are taken once a day.

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**I am a
socialist,
nothing
else
makes
any sense**

**'I was not
born
patient.
It's not
one of my
attributes'**

tion's PR girl, slightly dolefully. Such dismal omens notwithstanding, it will doubtless prove a mega-hit. Stevenson has the touch to pick and forge winners. From *The Politician's Wife* to her latest role in the film of *Emma*, her name is almost a guarantee of success.

There is an irritating quality about the flawlessness. After a morning of delays, I am particularly suspicious. Of course, she is working to a constantly juggled schedule, but still there is something disturbing in the deference surrounding her.

Juliet is needed for the next shot. Juliet is hungry. Juliet wants to have her lunch first. No, she hasn't quite finished

For several years Juliet Stevenson has lived with Hugh Brody, an anthropologist and writer, and her existence — once a whirl of amusement — has been whittled down to work and family.

go to the cinema and theatre hardly at all. We only socialise with people who come round. I couldn't justify leaving Rosa to go to go out and party. "I have to wrangle with domesticity a bit, in terms of clearing up mess, but I love it. Some things amaze me. I was not born patient. It's not one of my natural attributes. With children, you have all these repetitive routines and the endless mess. "I'm amazed that I can sweep the floor three times a day and not be killing someone, but that's love isn't it? You really discover what love is for — to lubricate the system so that you can do all that stuff and not enrage it."

a revelation." It is also, a thought she does not say so, sort of displacement.

"I used really to be obsessive about work. I could never cut it off and I was up half the night worrying and doing the retrospective analysis." There were also times when, despite outward polish and unblemished reviews, she slipped beyond mere nerves into more dangerous terror.

"Real stage fright is a very unnatural mental state—awful games going on in your mind. I had a terrible bout of it when I was in *Troilus and Cressida*, As You Like It and *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* a

at the same time.

"I was overtired, stressed out, completely knackered. I got out there paralysed with terror, and that creates more terror. Words stop being words. They turn into illogical, named worms, and you can't think. Acting is 90 per cent bluffing, so you can't do it. But I got over it.

"And having a child is a great concentrator. It increases your concentration rather than dissipating it. I was working in the theatre, I can leave home 5.30 and throw a switch."

She was never, of course, just an actress. A leading Labour livvie, she was reputed to be a first-rank Kinnon

grandstander during the run-up to the last general election. "I didn't do much. It's been really exaggerated," she says, suddenly irritated.

"I did help launch their fiscal policy, because it had the possibility of doing a great regenerative job for the industry."

"There's a lot of stuff in the Labour Party that I feel very uncomfortable with. I'm not a hard-core member, as you are. I'm absolutely not at the disposal."

"Like most people, I desperately want to get this government out, and that's why we've been reduced to. I'd be less ambivalent about Labour if they were a party ready

behind proportional representation. As it is, I've never been able wholeheartedly to myself behind Labour, though I am a socialist. Nothing else makes any sense."

Lunchtime is almost over and assistant directors gather at her door. Her daughter is sleeping now, is wheeled by to the trailer, and Stevens in her crumpled skirt, apron and slippers, is required to say:

"Dreadfully dowdy," says, inspecting her costume critically. But rather approvingly. Unlike as she is to typecast, the tag of housewife superstar has a certain resonance.

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THE SUNDAY TIMES

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THE SUNDAY TIMES IS THE SUNDAY PAPERS

Is this the closing of our minds?

Magnus Linklater on the idea of a university, and its grim reality

Location, location, location, said Conrad Hilton — that was the secret of a successful hotel. Education, education, education, said Tony Blair in Blackpool, that was the key to a successful Labour programme. There is perhaps only one minor difference. Whereas Mr Hilton was investing in a hugely profitable business, Mr Blair faces the prospect of pouring money into a dark and apparently bottomless hole.

More than half of Britain's universities, we are told, will be in debt by the year 2000. Nearly 80 of them are forecast to be running at a loss within the next four years, unable to invest in development or research and so attract top-calibre staff. They blame government cutbacks and funding changes in last November's Budget, and claim they will have to start looking for redundancies and introducing tuition charges to get by. At the same time the numbers of those in higher education are still rising. New universities scramble to keep their totals up (at what cost to standards?) while undergraduates, strapped for cash, discover that they simply cannot afford to stay the full course.

Students will tap into courses using digital telecommunications for video-conferencing. There will be no lectures as some of us fondly remember them, no cosy tutorials, no stern warnings from directors of studies. In the new tele-era, students will be expected to maintain their own rate of progress, and of course there will be fewer distractions. It is hard, for instance, to imagine a computer pulling up a lazy student as Roy Harrod did the young Randolph Churchill in 1930: "I hope you will arise from your slumbers and take the final schools seriously..." (a remark recalled in Winston Churchill's new biography of his father).

There is no doubt that in a geographically remote area such as the North of Scotland, this approach serves a need. It echoes what Tony Blair's favourite philosopher, John Macmurray, once wrote was the central idea of a university: "...to be the cultural authority of the region that it serves. In virtue of this it can and should hold together every aspect of human culture, in its widest sense, in a unity." Nevertheless, there is a hole at the heart of it.

In the end, proper teaching always costs money

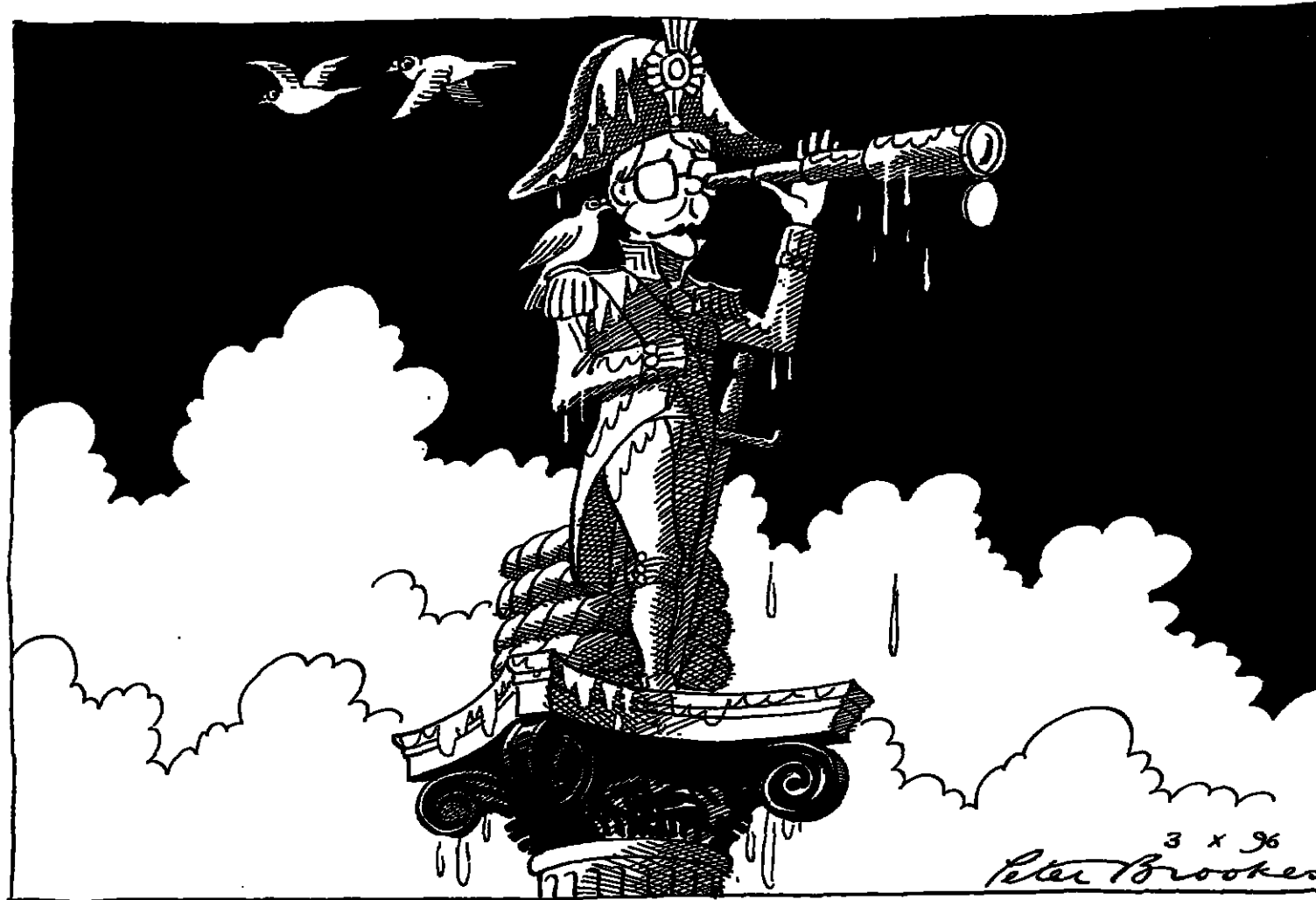
I suspect that not even Macmurray imagined that the needs of the community could be met in front of a computer screen. What most modern employers want — and claim is hard to find — is the well-rounded and capable graduate whose skills lie as much in the way he deals with other people as in his IQ. Personnel managers interviewing job candidates often complain that although graduates may come equipped with impressive degrees, they lack necessary qualities of judgment, leadership, balance, self-motivation — what the American writer Daniel Goleman characterises as "emotional intelligence".

There will doubtless be talk of new approaches to student loans, more emphasis on private funding, closer relations with industry; the Dearing committee is said to be looking at limiting free university education to just two years and charging those who want to go on. But to judge from Labour's enthusiasm for information technology, the approach we are likely to hear a great deal more about involves a whole new approach to learning. The video revolution, interactive programmes, "distance learning", those buzz words of the new age offer a tempting alternative to some of the stiffer traditions of higher education. They may bring a chill to the hearts of those of us who emerged from the gentle chaos we remember as university, but they are here to stay.

A model for the college of the future was unveiled this week with the announcement that a new University of the Highlands and Islands is to be part-funded by the Millennium Commission. It will have no central campus, but will link ten locations as far apart as Shetland and the island of Lewis, which will communicate via computers.

I spoke to one university chancellor whose establishment has close links to industry, runs at a healthy profit, and leads the field in information technology. Nonetheless, he said, his watchword these days is "learning through life". He argues that the "battery hen" system of higher education produces large numbers of highly qualified graduates who are quite incapable of dealing with the outside world. He believes passionately in the advantages of new technology, but says that it can supply only 20 per cent of a student's needs. The other 80 per cent, in his view, has to come from human support. He quotes Norbert Wiener of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who wrote: "The proper use of technology is to enable the human use of human beings."

And in the end computer learning simply cannot fill the gap unless it is backed by the proper people. And when that happens, it costs just as much as traditional methods. Education, however delivered, does not come cheap. Even if you utter the word three times.



"I SEE NO SLEAZE, MY DEAREST HAMILTON..."

The week the Tories lost

Nobody comes out of the Hamilton affair well, but Major loses most

It does not seem to do people much good to get close to Mohamed Al Fayed. It did not do Tiny Rowland any good at all, he thinks that Mr Al Fayed pinched Harrods off him. If Tiny Rowland's classic pamphlet *A Hero from Zero* is to be believed, it did not do Papa Doc Duvalier or Adnan Khashoggi much good either. The Sultan of Brunei has few complaints, but is perhaps too rich to need to complain.

The Al Fayed friendship, if it can be called that, may have led Peter Preston, the previous Editor of *The Guardian*, to approve the notorious fax to the Paris Ritz; that misjudgment may even have contributed to his now being an ex-editor. It need scarcely be said that the Al Fayed connection has done no good to Neil Hamilton or Ian Greer. They were his allies; see how he has treated them.

What is odd about Mr Al Fayed is that he is not only bad news for his associates; he also has the knack of being bad news for himself. He has, for some reason, the desire to be a member of the British Establishment. His view seems to have been established when the British Empire was still a world symbol of prestige. He behaves as though Lord Cromer was still the Sirdar in Cairo. It is all rather touching. Mohamed Al Fayed has bought Harrods, given the nation a good laugh, and has served countless glasses of good champagne to the aimable freeholders of British café society; he has even resurrected *Punch*, and the British were beginning to take him to their hearts. One could hear people saying how much he had done for Britain, what an amusing chap he was, how unreasonable it was to refuse him citizenship, and so on. Whoever was advising him on public relations, and he did a lot of it for himself, was doing an excellent job. A Labour government might well have given him the citizenship he coveted. He was about to become respectable.

Now that glittering prospect has all vanished. Tiny Rowland used to write very unpleasant things about him, but now he has given evidence to worse things about himself. It is his evidence, supported by three members of his staff, that he used personally to stuff envelopes with £50 notes to bribe Neil Hamilton to lobby for him in Parliament. Mr Hamilton denies the allegation, but Al Fayed

insists that it was so. I am not well versed in the law of bribery, and gather it is not a criminal offence to stuff a Member of Parliament's purse with paper money. Yet it probably does constitute a contempt of Parliament. If Mr Al Fayed is telling the truth, which may or may not be the case, he should be called to the Bar of the House and given a good wiggling by Speaker Boothroyd. No Labour Home Secretary will have the effrontery to make him a British citizen now. It is all very sad — thousands of bottles of Harrods champagne have all been wasted, not to mention a few weekends at the Ritz in Paris.

Neil Hamilton and Ian Greer are also looking pretty silly, leaving aside the question of the ethics of what they have been doing. From what we now know, their chances of winning the libel action against *The Guardian* can never have been very good. If the case had been heard, the combined costs would have come to £1 million or so, which they would have had to pay if they lost. The damages were, at best, unlikely to be very large. *The Guardian*, with new evidence coming in on every tide, was never likely to settle. Neil Hamilton must have remembered that he had been economical with the truth when speaking to Michael Heseltine. Until this week, few people remembered what *The Guardian* alleged in 1994. They remember now. Apart from the costs, Neil and Ian have exploded their own reputations by going to the doors of the court and then dropping their action.

Yet the oddest behaviour of all may be John Major's. Without his or the whips' help, the case could never have reached this calamitous stage. Under the existing law, constitutional requirements prevented *The Guardian* from using matters under parliamentary privilege as part of their defence in the action. Neil Hamilton could not waive this privilege, even though he wished to do so. The courts had therefore refused to adjudicate on the case. It was the Government that made it

possible, by encouraging an amendment to the law. I went to the House of Lords on May 7 this year to listen to the debate on the committee stage of the Defamation Bill. One of the law lords, Lord Hoffmann, moved an amendment to allow individual Members to waive parliamentary privilege, an amendment openly designed to let Neil Hamilton proceed with his action against *The Guardian*.

I attended the debate expecting to vote for this amendment, which seemed broadly fair. Lord Hoffmann moved it very hesitantly, saying he was "not an advocate for it"; a former law lord, Lord Simon of Glaisdale, opposed it on strong constitutional grounds. I thought the balance of legal argument in the debate had gone against the amendment, and decided to abstain, as did Lord Hoffmann himself. I expected the amendment to fail, but it was carried by 119 votes to 57. There is little doubt that it had the support of the Conservative whips; the Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, a nice man who gets things wrong, had spoken to Lord Hoffmann before the amendment was tabled. It later went through the Commons on Conservative votes.

Before the amendment, the Government was sitting pretty. Neil Hamilton had protested his innocence, as had the lobbyist Ian Greer. The action could not proceed for constitutional reasons. *The Guardian* could not produce its evidence, or obtain the damaging papers in the Government's own possession. The Prime Minister could not be called into the witness box. The sleaze issue could not be given a new round of publicity. The lid was on the box and it was firmly screwed down.

It was the Government that unscrewed it. The amendment would never have been tabled if Lord Mackay had not advised it. It would never have been passed, in the Lords or the Commons, if the whips had worked against it, however discreetly. Some-

body must have decided to push the amendment forward; this could hardly have been done without John Major's approval. Yet it was madness to let the issue be reopened.

Almost everyone has been damaged. *The Guardian* has a scoop, but is itself under the curse of Harrods. Neil Hamilton is finished as a politician. Ian Greer must be pretty well finished as a lobbyist. Mohamed Al Fayed is finished as a candidate member of the British Establishment; he has been returned to the bouncer's enclosure. Yet surely the curse of Harrods has fallen most heavily on the Prime Minister himself. This week, Tony Blair's speech at Blackpool sounded only too prime ministerial. This week also the Tories found themselves once again up to the eyeballs in accusations of sleaze. This may well have been the decisive week of the pre-election period.

One of the difficulties is that Parliament is now so close to a general election. Any effective form of inquiry needs to be quick and open; Scott, for instance, took far too long. A quick and open inquiry would coincide with the immediate pre-election period, when both parties will be seeking every possible advantage. The public very much dislikes what it hears, and rightly so; it wants the truth to be established. The timing is not favourable for the impartial and meticulous examination of events in which many have behaved properly, but some may have behaved unwisely, and some seem to have behaved disgracefully.

Should we all beat our breasts and say that things were never like this in the old days? Not so, for they were exactly like this in the old days. This is the House of Commons not only of Pitt and Peel, but of Labouchere and Horatio Bottomley. Parliament has always had its cards and its cards as well as its orators and its heroes. Look at Disraeli, who comes into all four categories, as does Robert Walpole. One should not forget Colonel Wigg, Captain Kerby and Captain Cunningham-Reid, just among more recent military Members. Mohamed Al Fayed is admittedly a splendid invention, a sort of demiurge of self-alleged corruption, scattering confusion and banknotes wherever he goes, like Flora on a Venetian ceiling. But this week of sleazy brouhaha may well signal the end of 17 years of Tory administration.

We'll see juveniles in court

Michael Howard's regime is too soft, says Jack Straw

There are 56,000 adult prisoners in Britain's jails, and the number is rising by nearly 1,000 a month. Almost every one of them began offending when young. So why has the youth justice system in England and Wales so comprehensively failed to punish, divert or deter so many of those who now fill our jails as adults?

The facts of the failure are these. The kinds of crimes which young people commit — burglary, theft, handling — increased by 40 per cent between 1984 and 1993, while the number of young offenders dealt with by courts, or cautioned by police, fell 35 per cent over the same ten years. Despite this huge drop in their workload, the efficiency of the youth courts has worsened. A young offender arrested today will not, on average, be sentenced until next Easter — by which time any connection between crime and its consequences will have vanished in his or her understanding. Cases involving serious or persistent offenders take up to a year, sometimes more, with legal aid lawyers the only clear winners.

Meanwhile, young offenders run rings round the system. In Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, last year, youths aged from 12 to 15 operating in a gang were arrested 419 times before any effective action was taken. A magistrate told me earlier this year of a young offender who had complained bitterly about being taken to court, "because he hadn't had his five cautions yet". However, in half the cases which do finally reach court, the offender walks away with another warning. Is it any wonder that young offenders get a clear sense of their entitlement to commit crime, and impunity from its consequences?

Maddening to the police, this system fails the offender too, by defying practically everything we know about child development. Children, especially adolescents, need certainty and structure, to know where the boundaries are. Many children who end up in trouble have parents who act inconsistently towards them — harshly one moment, indulgently the next — so that the children have a very defective idea of what consequences will flow from bad behaviour. Too often, the youth justice system operates in a similar way.

Self-delusion and secrecy lie at the heart of this failure. For years, government and criminal justice professionals have convinced themselves that far from failing, the system has somehow been an outstanding success. With stupefying complacency, the Home Office — under Michael Howard — told the Home Affairs Select Committee in 1993 that there had been a "real fall in the number of juvenile offenders per head of population since 1981". The deliberate error was to assert that a fall in the number of youngsters going to court represented a fall in the number of young criminals.

Adult courts are open, and their reality is regularly conveyed by television drama as well as in the news. Youth courts meet in private. There is no continuous reporting of the process, still less dramatic portrayal, and furthermore, precious little monitoring of their effectiveness.

Some of the professionals are still trapped in an intellectual "secret garden", in which a culture of excuse for the failure of the system — and the offender — is all too prevalent. The complacent and mistaken idea that young offenders will grow out of this behaviour without correction or instruction is deeply entrenched.

Of course, crime has deeper causes than any defect in the criminal justice process. Providing youngsters with hope, getting 250,000 under-25s off benefit and into work is as much an anti-crime policy as it is an economic policy. The youth service needs to be strengthened, and truancy must be much more effectively countered.

But with the youth justice system, we will have to start again. The system can work only if it replicates the manner in which families and schools best cope, by acting swiftly, consistently, and by confronting the youngster, and the parents with the consequences of offending behaviour. To achieve this, the paralysing legal confusion between "welfare" and "punishment" must be ended.

This will entail a number of measures. The inappropriate, adversarial theatre of the youth court must be exchanged for an inquisitorial system; and endless cautions must be replaced with a single final warning, which will usually trigger intervention by family and community. There must be fast-track punishment for persistent and serious offenders, accompanied by extensive parental support and training, and reform of the chaotic custodial arrangements for young offenders.

The youth justice system in England and Wales has been so ineffective for so long that we now look up a larger proportion of our adult population than any other European country except Turkey. If we are firmer and more focused when the offenders are young, we can reverse this unenviable record, reducing both the numbers of potential adult offenders and their victims.

The author is Shadow Home Secretary and will address the Labour Party conference today.

Great lengths

SMIRKING at the Labour Party conference in Blackpool was Sir David Putnam, the bearded film producer and Blairite. He had his latest film script under his arm: a screenplay for Vikram Seth's massive novel *A Suitable Boy*.

Putnam has bought the rights to Seth's 1,349-page epic, one of the longer novels in the English language. He has sold the idea to Channel 4, and has been working on the idea with Verity Lambert, producer of *Dr Who* and the less distinguished *Ordinary*.

Together they plan a series of ten or more episodes filmed on location at a cost of some £1 million. Channel 4 yesterday confirmed that the screenplay had been written. "Vikram Seth has been acting as a consultant on the project, which is now quite well advanced," said a 4-man. "We are now looking for finance, and filming should start at about this time next year."

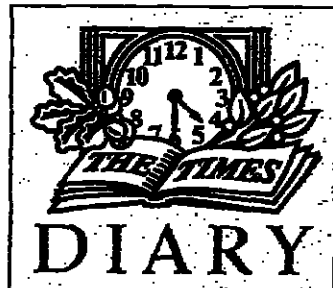
The novel, set in India just after the British left in 1947, paints a panoramic picture, a sort of Indian *orgy Saga* told through the lives of interlocking families. The central character is a demure 19-year-old girl called Lata, whose bossy

mother searches relentlessly for a suitable boy to marry her. I understand that talent-spotting in Bollywood has already begun.

More security chaos at the Labour Party conference in Blackpool, caused this time by condoms being handed out free by the Terence Higgins Trust. Their tin-foil wrappers played havoc with the metal detectors of the security



Baroness Castle, how about money not to ask questions?



men, who insisted that delegates emptied their pockets of the embarrassing contents.

Abbey habit

KNICKERBOCKER TROUBLE struck one of the judges invited to Tuesday's service at Westminster Abbey to mark the opening of the legal year. I shall refrain from identifying the brassy soul, and say only that he is corpulent. He managed to squeeze into his silken hose, but a dinner too many in the course of duty meant that he couldn't do up his buttons.

An anxious call to Ede & Ravenscroft, legal robesmakers in Chancery Lane, proved fruitless, as they had none for hire. In desperation, I learned friend turned to some theatrical costumers round the corner, who were happy to oblige.

Only when he reached the changing room at the Abbey did he notice a label sewn inside with the name of their last occupant: Sir Harry Secombe.

Mills boon

SHAKING a leg with hordes of teenyboppers the other night at the Pyramids Centre, Portsmouth, was the actor Sir John Mills, who is 88. He has developed an interest in very loud pop music of late, as a groupie of the band Kula Shaker, currently topping the chart with their album *K*. The band's lead singer and guitarist is Crispian Mills, Sir John's grandson.



Mills minor: Crispian

"It was a great kick to be there," says Sir John, who watched the set from a platform at the back of the hall. "I'm an old musical hand myself, but this is rather a different sound. We listen to *Top of the Pops* every week now."

Room 101

AT LEAST one vestige of traditional management lingers on at John Birt's BBC: rank-pulling over hotel rooms. In Blackpool on Tuesday night, Birt's inner cabinet started to arrive. They were led by Will Wyatt, the managing director of BBC network television, into the smart Pembroke Hotel in the centre of town, which is a hub of late-night conference schmoozing. Wyatt broke the news to several staff that they would have to abandon their marble bathrooms and satellite televisions because higher powers needed their rooms.

Dragging their laptop computers behind them, the refugees cleared out sullenly and are now stationed in a B&B some ten miles out of town.

Fab girl

NEWS to perk up the Duke of Buccleuch, who is said to be Europe's greatest private landowner. Jo-



Joanna: long walk

anna Lumley, the beehived television star who stumbles her way, swilling champagne, through *Absolutely Fabulous*, has bought a small cottage on his Drumlanrig estate in Dumfriesshire. Supplies of Bollinger will be hard to come by. The nearest village to her run-down cottage is some ten miles away, and the place can be reached only by walking along a narrow track through fields and woodland. It's no place for stilettos.

P.H.S



A HARDER EMU

Blair is starting to make sense on a single currency

Labour's policy on a single currency is hardening. This week in Blackpool, as our Political Editor reports, hints have been coming thick and fast that a Labour government would not join the first wave of economic and monetary union. Regardless of the merits or otherwise of British membership, a new Blair administration would not want to see its first term dominated by the preparations needed for Britain to sign up by 1999.

Enthusiasts for European Union in the Labour leadership used to believe that, if Britain did not enter the single currency in the first wave, the party's pro-European credentials would be tarnished; that this country would not be taken seriously by its European partners and its influence would be diminished. Now they are starting to think more subtly. They are aware that a Labour government in Britain is not so fervently desired by other member states that the mood would become friendly almost whatever Mr Blair did. And they are thinking more carefully about what EMU would mean.

Mr Blair used to say that he was in favour of the principle, but wanted to see proper convergence before signing Britain up. Now he has taken to using arguments of principle against a single currency: not those of sovereignty, but of economics. How, he asks, would a single currency area cope with an external shock which hit some countries harder than others? Without exchange rate adjustments, the only variables that can smooth out the differences are the movement of labour from poor countries to rich ones, or huge transfers of money from rich countries to poor ones. The former is difficult in the EU because of language and culture; the latter would require huge subsidies.

As Alan Greenspan, chairman of the US Federal Reserve and custodian of one of the biggest currency unions in the world, could tell Mr Blair, America has these problems.

But it is easier for an unemployed car worker in Detroit to move to Colorado than for a Portuguese fisherman to start a new life in Germany. And even with greater labour mobility, the redistribution of money from rich to poor states in America is far higher than Europe could contemplate. The implication of Mr Blair's argument is that a single currency could work only if Europe were as united — economically, politically and linguistically — as America. That might take the Labour leader's famous thousand years.

If Mr Blair is worrying about the theory behind a single currency, others in his party are concerned about its implications for jobs. Robin Cook, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, told the conference that "jobs will be the bottom line by which we judge whether Britain will join a single currency". He called for the Maastricht criteria to be rewritten to add low levels of unemployment. If this has any chance of happening, it will not be in time for the first wave. Mr Cook's stricter criteria, which include convergence of output and investment, also point to delay.

Labour's views on sovereignty are weaker than those of the Tories. A Labour government would still be tempted to join EMU if it felt that Britain would otherwise lose inward investment or sacrifice economic growth. But at least, by waiting to see what effect EMU had on the British economy, there would be a chance for Britain to remain outside for longer — possibly much longer if it were seen to gain from the flexibility of retaining its own currency.

Had Labour included a commitment to EMU in its manifesto for this election, a victory could have been taken as a mandate to join. As the party is pledged to seek "the full consent of the people" first, that now means either a referendum or a second general election. Labour is still wedded to the social chapter. But on the European issue that most divides the country, Labour has become a safer bet than it was.

BENCHMARKS FOR HONG KONG

Firm words which will need to be backed by legal action

Chris Patten's annual policy speech yesterday was the last to be made by a British Governor of Hong Kong. Inevitably, it was something of a report card on the four years since he arrived, with a characteristically vigorous defence of the reforms that have buttressed political and administrative accountability and improved Hong Kong's quality of life. But its tone was anything but vainglorious. The Governor was out to emphasise Britain's continuing political, moral and financial interest in Hong Kong after it reverts to Chinese sovereignty next July — and to lay down 16 "benchmarks" by which people will judge whether China is abiding by its treaty commitment to leave Hong Kong to manage its own affairs.

The administrative report card measures up well against Mr Patten's pledges of four years ago. Then, he said that without losing its competitive edge, Hong Kong could clean up its environment and provide the social safety nets that would make it a more compassionate place. He has been proved right. Spurred by cuts in income and business taxes, Hong Kong has grown fast enough to finance heavy public investment in education, health and welfare, housing, community policing and anti-pollution measures, while still increasing its reserves by a quarter, to around £27 billion next year.

Politically, Peking's criticisms of Mr Patten have obscured facts with which Peking must soon contend. Habits of democratic debate have rapidly taken root, and Mr Patten's carefully circumscribed political reforms have consistently been supported by two thirds of Hong Kong's people.

Mr Patten's benchmarks for post-1997 Hong Kong neatly encompass the reasons why Peking fears Hong Kong as a source of unacceptable political pressures. They include probity in public life, executive autonomy, a meritocratic civil service,

financial independence, a "fairly and openly elected" legislature and freedom of the press, opinion and rights of assembly, including vigils and demonstrations. Such a list will irritate powerful Hong Kong businessmen who are confident that they have privileged channels to Peking. But it has much in common, as Mr Patten remarks, with changing political expectations throughout Southeast Asia. And in Hong Kong itself, his list has wide popular endorsement.

One powerful reason is that China is not trusted, as Britain largely has been, to respect the most basic principles of the rule of law. Hong Kong Chinese, looking nervously at the corruption, crime and arbitrary laws across the soon-to-be-dotted line that divides them from China proper, will understand the connection between political accountability and Hong Kong's future prosperity. That is why, as Mr Patten observes, China's determination to sweep away Hong Kong's first wholly-elected Legislative Council and replace it by a non-elected "provisional" legislature "lies at the heart of wider doubts about the future of pluralism and freedom in Hong Kong".

China intends to set up this provisional body even before the handover, an act that as Mr Patten implied yesterday would violate the Sino-British Joint Declaration on Hong Kong. Mr Patten says that the Hong Kong Government will have nothing to do with China's creation. Peking will not worry about that, however. He should go further. Britain should actively pursue the issue through international legal channels, thus demonstrating that for Britain and Hong Kong, the Patten benchmarks are firmly related to respect for treaty obligations. The sooner this is clear, the better. China is unlikely to respect the Joint Declaration after July, 1997, if Britain fails to challenge a breach while it still governs Hong Kong.

BEYOND THE TOASTER

The Consumers' Association offers its agenda for government

Among the small army of campaigners keen to display their wares at this year's party conferences is the Consumers' Association. Which? is no longer enough. Which toaster is a far too easy question. The Consumers' Association will offer *Making Markets Work*, its agenda for the next government.

This document marks a departure on several fronts. It attempts to address the big issues of quality and choice rather than the product-by-product analysis that *Which?* has long been known for. It aims to broaden the focus beyond consumer durables such as toasters to encompass any manufactured product, financial service, or government operation funded by payment or taxation.

In a process of modernisation not dissimilar to one conducted elsewhere, Sheila McKechnie, director for the last 18 months, strives to redefine the language long associated with the association. The linkage of consumerism with self-interest and greed of consumerism and corporations are opposite and opposed. In recognition of the fact that it is accepted that "goods and services are increasingly being provided through the market". The regulatory regime of the United States is offered as a model.

This initiative comes at a time when the Consumers' Association has attracted some

controversy. The launch of its own credit card last month prompted accusations that, in this field at least, the independence and impartiality of the organisation has been placed in question. There are fears that this new style of campaigning will overshadow the traditional emphasis on product testing and detailed legal submissions. Ms McKechnie would retort that throughout its 39-year history the association has had the dual function of both promoting quality and lobbying for legislative change.

The details of *Making Markets Work* will prove provocative. On areas such as the practice of the professions, and the need for government to ensure that the material necessary for real choice actually reaches parents, the Consumers' Association is on the cutting edge of contemporary argument. In other cases, especially transport, with the predictable call for a comprehensive national policy, matters seem still stuck in the mindset of the 1970s.

Although it professes to support effective rules rather than just more regulation, the draft manages to propose one new ministry, ten new forms of supervisory agencies, and at least 35 examples of new or revised legislation, all in the space of 24 pages. This is a prospectus with much to impress but with rather too much to endorse.

Blair's speech, his party, his Britain

From Mr Nicolas Walter

Sir, "Without Mr Blair", you say (leading article, October 2), "the Labour Party would be nowhere". But where would Blair be, we may ask, without the Labour Party? And where will he be, we may add, when he has finally got rid of all its policies and traditions?

Simon Jenkins (article, October 2) mentions Lloyd George's rhetoric and Ramsay MacDonald's mobbery. What about what happened to them, and to their parties?

Yours etc,
NICOLAS WALTER,
88 Islington High Street, N1,
October 2.

From Bishop Hugh Montefiore

Sir, So now we know, Blair's ten promises for a Labour Government do not include the environment and he barely made any mention of this important subject in his speech. There seems little point in Blair's emphasis on the next 1,000 years unless we are reasonably assured that mankind will have another 1,000 years of existence.

Yours faithfully,
THUGH MONTFIORE,
White Lodge, 32 Bellevue Road,
Wandsworth Common, SW17,
October 2.

From Mr William M. Ballantine

Sir, In his speech Tony Blair spoke of a Britain united: such a pity then that his policy on Scottish devolution could have exactly the opposite effect.

Yours faithfully,
W. M. BALLANTINE,
47 The Quarryknoves,
Dean Road, Botness, West Lothian,
October 2.

From Mr M. Feld

Sir, Would not a minimum wage be preferable to the present situation, which has the taxpayer, through family credit, subsidising skintight employers who do not pay a living wage?

Yours faithfully,
M. FELD,
36 Grove House,
Waverley Grove, N3,
October 1.

Political lobbyists

From Sir Edward du Cann

Sir, It is plainly imprudent for any MP or parliamentary candidate to accept payment from a lobbyist at any time ("Sleaze and misjudgment", leading article, October 2). If payment does not establish an obligation, it implies one.

However, it will be said if one consequence of the present furor is to discourage individual subscriptions to political parties during general elections or at any other time or to renew demands for the state funding of political parties as a substitute. The need in a democracy is to involve an increasing number of individuals in the political process, as Mr Blair has sensibly sought to do for the Labour Party and the Conservatives were once so adept at doing.

It is undoubtedly right to question the judgment of MPs who have taken money from lobbyists, if not to pillory them. Even more culpable is anyone who seeks to corrupt the independence of MPs by payments to them, direct or indirect. It is astonishing that the man who employed the lobbyist has hitherto escaped equal criticism or condemnation.

Yours faithfully,
EDWARD DU CANN,
9 Queen Elizabeth II Street,
Alderley, Cheshire,
October 2.

Mind your words

From Mr Peter Prescott, QC

Sir, Mr Best's proposed short Act of Parliament meant to catch stalkers (letter, October 1) only goes to show how difficult it is to frame one. Thus his wording:

It shall be an offence for any person persistently to press his or her attentions upon another in circumstances where he/she knows or ought reasonably to anticipate that his/her words and/or conduct are or is unwelcome to that other person or may be so and may cause to that other person vexation, anxiety or distress

would cover, amongst other things: Mr Best, when making an evasive witness in court.

Anyone, when pressing Mr John Major to come to some sort of a decision on European monetary union.

Yours faithfully,
PETER PRESCOTT,
8 New Square, Lincoln's Inn, WC2,
October 1.

From Mr Peter Croft

Sir, Congratulations to Mr Best on his proposed law to deter stalkers and "others who make a nuisance of themselves".

The difficulty I foresee is building enough prisons to accommodate the entire staff of the Inland Revenue and the VAT inspectorate.

Yours faithfully,
PETER CROFT,
Blackmoor,
20 Tenison Avenue, Cambridge,
October 1.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Loved ones at sea in BT yacht race

From Dr R. S. Mathur

Sir, My heart goes out to Tracey Capstick and her children (Sport, October 1), deprived of her husband and their father, James, by the BT Global Challenge. There is, however, another side to the undoubted agony being caused by this event, in which amateur volunteers are competing in the toughest yacht race around the world.

Watching Group 4 disappear in the distance as it approached The Needles, having momentarily caught a glimpse of my newly wed wife on deck as the boat surged past our (relatively) clumsy ferry, I learned that it is possible to share in another person's sense of challenge and adventure. No matter how cynical one tries to be, this is a source of wonder and exaltation.

Anyone with a loved one on board the yacht will understand Tracey Capstick's deep anxiety, and some of us even felt the same panic as the excitement of the start faded and we made our way back to empty homes and prosaic lives. Observing the start in gale-force winds and rough seas, it seemed likely that at least some of the crew members will find the going tougher than they ever expected.

Hopefully, this will bring out qualities and strengths whose existence they did not previously suspect — and this applies equally to those they leave behind. Just as the competitors in the Challenge will have to find hidden re-

serves in the months to come, so will all those who miss them.

Yours faithfully,
RAJ MATHUR,
10 Elmfield Road,
Tyndalls Park, Bristol,
October 2.

From Mrs Jane Sadler

Sir, Like Tracey Capstick, I stood on the quay at Ocean Village in Southampton as dawn broke on Sunday, September 29, and waved goodbye to my husband, a watch-leader on *Yacht 3 Com*.

Not surprisingly, it was an emotionally charged atmosphere that morning: the awesome challenge of "the world's toughest yacht race" hanging over skippers, crew and families alike — but perhaps Mrs Capstick's pain and anguish and her bitterness towards the race and its organisers may be balanced by the intense love and pride I feel for my husband in taking part.

I hope the BT Global Challenge fulfils some of the dreams of its skippers and crew and that they all return safe and unharmed at the end of their own personal challenge.

Yours faithfully,
JANE SADLER,
Old Manor Farmhouse, The Square,
Long Crendon, Buckinghamshire,
October 1.

Rabies and quarantine

From Dr Henry E. Carter

Sir, Lady Fretwell (letter, October 1) is quite right to quote Mrs Angela Browning's Commons written reply of July 15 on rabies. Mrs Browning's answer also confirmed that, since 1971, of approximately two million mammals of susceptible species (including 200,000 dogs and cats) imported into the United Kingdom, not a single scientifically proven case of rabies has been recorded.

Like many other members of the veterinary profession, I am of the opinion that the present quarantine regulations should be scrapped. Many of us think that a system involving vaccination and blood testing of imported cats and dogs, combined with the use of microchips as a means of identification, would be more humane and efficient, and in line with modern scientific thought.

These measures, entirely under the control of the state veterinary service, would ensure that no legally imported

animal would be at all likely to introduce rabies into the United Kingdom.

Yours faithfully,
HENRY CARTER,
Sparrow Hall,
Forty Hill, Enfield, Middlesex,
October 1.

From Mr Glyn Ford, MEP for Greater Manchester East (Socialist Group (Labour))

Sir, Mrs Angela Barkham (letter, September 27) asks how many animals over the last ten years have developed rabies while in quarantine.

Having asked exactly this question of the European Commission myself (except that it referred to the last five years), I can tell her that the answer, delivered on September 6, is that "there have been no cases detected at Community borders".

Yours,
GLYN FORD,
46 Stamford Road,
Mossley, Lancashire,
September 30.

From Dr Larry B. O. Amure

Sir, If a wife's authority was sufficient to allow extraction of spermatozoa from her husband, why can her authority no longer suffice regarding their utilisation?

I am baffled, as maybe the time to consider consent was before the initial procedure was carried out.

Yours faithfully,
B. O. AMURE,
The Surgery, 1 Drings Close,
Over, Cambridgeshire,
October 1.

Kashmir plebiscite

From Mr Randhir Singh Bains

Sir, Sir Frederic Bennett asks (letter, September 30) why India continues to refuse to hold a plebiscite in Kashmir, as demanded by the UN resolution of August 13, 1948. The answer lies in Pakistan's persistent refusal to honour the first two parts of the resolution.

The UN resolution was in three parts. The first and second parts called for a ceasefire and asked Pakistan, as aggressor, to withdraw all its troops, while accepting that India could retain some of its troops in Kashmir. Part three, which was not binding unless the first two had been implemented (see the UN aide-memoire, January 14, 1949), asked for a plebiscite to be held in Kashmir.

The holding of a plebiscite was, therefore, dependent upon Pakistan's vacating the territory it had forcefully occupied during its invasion of Kashmir in October 1947. But instead of withdrawing its troops, Pakistan waged a second war against India in September 1965 to grab the rest of Kashmir, thereby rendering any plea for holding a plebiscite in Kashmir pointless.

Yours faithfully,
RANDHIR SINGH BAINS,
34 Shere Road, Gants Hill, Essex.

Costume drama

From Mr Terence Gavaghan

Sir, In your Diary item of September 27 you referred to the "underpant trouble" of Zulu extras in the so-far confused and disappointing BBC1 series on Cecil Rhodes.

In the early 1950s the great John Ford directed the comparatively trivial but since "cult" movie *Mogambo* in which Clark Gable, Ava Gardner, Grace Kelly and a young Donald Sinden starred. Much of the action was filmed in northern Kenya, where I was serving as a District Commissioner.

I had gathered 1,000 Samburu warriors with spears, as well rewarded extras for war-dancing scenes with Clark and Ava. As these splendid young men squatted down in their chosen red silk breast-to-knee robes

Country roads

From the County Surveyor of Essex

Sir, Mr Tim Craig, writing from a Shropshire village (letter, September 25), doesn't want his country lanes resurfaced. This makes him rare: my postbag is filled with letters from people demanding just that.

I am sure the process he is referring to is only "surface dressing", not a full resurfacing, and means spraying the road surface with bitumen and spreading a thin layer of stones on it. This doesn't do anything for potholes, which need to be patched before it is done.

Surface dressing is essential to keep water out of the road construction and to retain skid resistance. It should be done every six or seven years, but with current budgets the average return period now exceeds 20 years.

Yes, if we want our country roads to revert to cart tracks we don't need to do surface dressing. Mr Craig might not mind, but it would be a terrible blow to the rural economy of the country.

Yours sincerely,
MARTIN COCKSOLE,
County Surveyor,
Essex County Council,
Highways and Transportation
Department,
County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex.

before her, Ava clutched my elbow and demanded: "Do you see what I see?"

At once Murielle Allen, wardrobe mistress married to Bunny Allen, legendary white hunter-in-charge, leaped to the rescue with kilt pins to secure the revealing partitions of the front ranks.

Yours etc,
TERENCE GAVAGHAN,
62 Hotham Road, SW15,
September 30.

Business letters, page 29

Letters that are intended for publication should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be sent to a fax number — 0171-782 5046.

Liverpool at odds on slave heritage

From Mr Fritz Spiegel

Sir, As my name was mentioned in your report (September 9) and correspondence (September 19, 24) on slavery and the image of Liverpool, I should be grateful to be allowed to make some points.

The politically correct (but historically absurd) view is to maintain the fiction that the slave trade was an exclusively white-on-black outrage, and that Africans were always captured by European raiding-parties. To say otherwise, it seems, is tantamount to denying the Holocaust.

Marika Sherwood (letter, September 19) is right to point out that Liverpool continued to trade with slave-holding states long after abolition — indeed she is more right than she thinks. Britain, like most other countries, to this day trades with states in which slavery is endemic — all of them on the African continent and Arabian peninsula.

Slavery was certainly a cornerstone of Liverpool's overseas trade, as Mr Richard Foster, Director of the Merseyside National Museums, points out (September 24). Merchants fought tooth and nail against abolition. But who can now say how the gains from slavery were ploughed into legitimate industry — just as our present-day thriving (and multiracial) drugs barons contribute to the general wealth of the city? Incidentally, Mr Foster's museums are brimming with artefacts which Liverpool privateers plundered from French and Dutch ships. Where do we stop?

What is certain is that not a single site or building that sprang from this odious trade now remains — which makes the "slavery heritage trail" such an absurdity. Unlike the light-hearted tours of Beatles "shrines", these excursions can only generate what has become known as "Black rage" — which has also manifested itself in random attacks on statues of Liverpool worthies — even noble abolitionists — just in case their families benefited from the ill-gotten wealth.

It was the same kind of "rage" which earlier this year halted the restoration of a sculpted frieze on St George's Hall because this contains a man of negroid appearance "bowing the knee before Queen Victoria". It was of no avail to point out that all her subjects did so. Even a statue of Christopher Columbus has had to be removed to save it from attack.

Yours faithfully,
FRITZ SPIEGEL,
4 Windermere Terrace,
Liverpool 8,
September 29.

Crowther at home

From Mr T. R. Lowe

Sir, May I add a personal note to your obituary of Leslie Crowther (September 30). During a period spent as Chairman of the Antique Collectors' Club in Wells, Somerset, I had the dubious responsibility of booking the speakers on a low budget.

Having read a magazine feature about Leslie as a keen collector of pot lids and sporting prints, I approached him as a possible speaker, somewhat apologetically as the normal payment was between £10 and £15.

He responded immediately, inviting the club to his home where he and his wife, Jean, were marvellous hosts allowing the members to wander freely to view the collections, offering refreshments and showing particular concern for the older people on the visit. As a fee he suggested a donation to the local church.

It was an evening of great warmth and civility offered by a gentleman of immense charm.

Yours sincerely,
TIM LOWE,
(Headmaster),
Hereford Cathedral Junior School,
28 Castle Street, Hereford,
October 1.

Please tick...

From Mr D. R. Huntingford

Sir, When completing a monitoring form at a local authority charity funding and development conference I was intrigued to see the following: Please tick the boxes that apply to you. Sexuality: Heterosexual; Lesbian; Gay man; Gay woman; Bisexual; Other, please specify.

I would like to know if anybody ticked the last.

Needless to say I was grateful for the other note on the document: "You do not have to complete this form."

Yours sincerely,
D. R. HUNTINGFORD,
4 Woodstock Road,
Walthamstow, E17,
October 1.

Uneasy lies the head

From Mr Keith Chambers

Sir, The Duchess of York is reported today as having said "I feel like I've got a 10-tonne truck on my head". Was this a left-hand drive vehicle or do even our figures of speech now have to be metricated?

Yours faithfully,
KEITH CHAMBERS,
19 Hill Road,
Oakley, Basingstoke, Hampshire,
October 1.

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NEWS

Multiple birth woman loses babies

Mandy Allwood was said to be devastated after losing her remaining five babies and the dream of becoming the first woman to give birth to octuplets.

Miss Allwood, whose pregnancy sparked an ethical debate over fertility treatment, selective abortion and chequebook journalism, had been told on Monday that it would be a miracle if any of the babies were to survive. Page 1

Labour unlikely to join single currency

The Labour leadership is edging towards a decision to stay out of the first wave of a European single currency if it goes ahead in 1999. The party's most influential figures are privately voicing serious doubts over whether a Labour government coming to power next year would want to make such a momentous move so soon after entering office. Pages 1, 10, 11

Peace talks deadlock

President Clinton's emergency Middle East summit broke up without any resolution of the issues dividing the Israelis and Palestinians. Pages 1, 16

Lorry's 'secret'

A lorry driver travelled the country for ten days with the body of the French student Céline Figard in the back of his cab after she was raped, beaten and strangled, a court was told. Page 3

Bribery law

Plans to tighten the law on bribery and corruption by MPs and other public officials are being drawn up by the Government's top law body, the Law Commission. Page 4

Yuppie flu mistake

Patients with extreme fatigue have been misled by claims that they are suffering from so-called yuppie flu, three royal medical colleges said. Page 5

Fertility court case

A woman who was banned from using her dead husband's sperm to have a baby thought she was pregnant at the time of his death, the High Court was told. Page 6

Bird survey confusion

A new survey of Britain's birds has thrown into confusion previous notions of declining numbers by including habitats not normally considered, such as urban and suburban areas. Page 8

Mystery man gives money to the Scots

A mystery Englishman claiming to be a millionaire lottery winner has been astonishing people in Inverness by trying to give his money away to every stranger he meets. The fast-talking Londoner, with tattooed arms, who calls himself both Kevin and Stevie-boy, has been producing wads of notes in bars, carparks and taxis. Page 1

Thatcher by Kohl

Baroness Thatcher was a driven woman who, according to Chancellor Helmut Kohl, never let him get a word in edgewise. Whenever he tried she used to snap at him not to interrupt her. Page 9

School tables help

Independent schools agreed action to help those of its number they believe suffer unjustly from the Government's examination league tables. Page 12

Waiting to march

Taliban Islamic soldiers are massed at the mouth of the strategic Salang Tunnel in northern Afghanistan, waiting spirits for the order to march. Page 13

Squabbling Nobel

The Swedish Academy, which will today announce the Nobel Prize for Literature, is a divided club dominated by squabbling professors, lexicologists and introspective writers. Page 14

70 die in crash

All 70 people aboard a Peruvian jetliner were feared dead after it crashed in the Pacific, near the capital, Lima. Page 15

European summit

A bout of squabbling between France and Italy heightened concern that a special European summit could highlight discord among member states as they strive to design a more coherent, streamlined Union. Page 17



Douglas Hogg, the Agricultural Minister, being protected at a West Country dairy show as farmers, angry at BSE policy, jostled him. Page 2

BUSINESS

Norwich Union: Almost three million investors and policyholders will receive an average £500 worth of free shares when it floats on the stock market next summer. Page 25

Lottery: The regulator of the National Lottery is contemplating legal action against Camelot. Page 25

Hotel float: Shares in Thistle Hotels, Britain's second largest hotel group, have been priced at 170p, the bottom of the previously indicated range of 170p - 210p. The price reflects City sentiment that the offer was too expensive. Page 25

Markets: The FT-SE 100 rose 22.9 points to close at 4015.1. Sterling's trade-weighted index rose from 87.0 to 87.3 after a rise from \$1.5640 to \$1.5677 and from DM2.3864 to DM2.3936. Page 28

SPORT

Football: Glenn Hoddle has instituted a strict regime for the England squad, cancelling weekend leave in advance of the World Cup match against Poland. Page 48

Cricket: Graham Gooch has withdrawn from the England A tour to Australia because his father is ill. Mike Gatting will replace him as coach. Page 44

Rugby league: South Wales refused an offer to play in the first division and pulled out of the Rugby Football League, three weeks after being denied a fast track into the Super League. Page 42

Tennis: Greg Rusedski reached the quarter-finals of the Singapore Open with a straight-sets victory over Grant Stafford, of South Africa. Page 42

ARTS

Films of the week: Jude, Hollywood's adaptation of Thomas Hardy's novel, turns out to be more austere mystery than cinematic delight, with the notable exception of Kate Winslet's mesmerising performance. Eddie Murphy remakes the Jerry Lewis classic *The Nutty Professor*. Page 35

Pop heroes: Forget Oasis. Suede are back, with a new British tour that sees them in better form than ever. Page 35

Light touch: Peter Blake has fun with the Old Masters at the National Gallery, transferring classical madonnas to California's Venice Beach. Page 36

New on video: Lavish costumes, miles of rifles and big wigs: the charms of *Restoration*. Page 37

FEATURES

Housewife/superstar: Juliet Stevenson talks to Mary Riddell about motherhood, acting and her political feelings. Page 19

Dr Thomas Stuttaford explains the decision on chronic fatigue syndrome, plus aneurysms of the aorta, a new drug for high blood pressure, poor nourishment for Highlands pensioners. Page 18

History and beauty: Roy Porter on a masterful account of a continent: Matthew Parris studies an androgynous Tony Blair; Pippa Greenwood on flowers. Pages 38, 39

Where did you go this summer? Spain and Greece were favourites, with Italy a close third. Staying at home was popular, too. Page 41

Bargains of the week: On horseback through South Africa or biking through Provence. Page 40

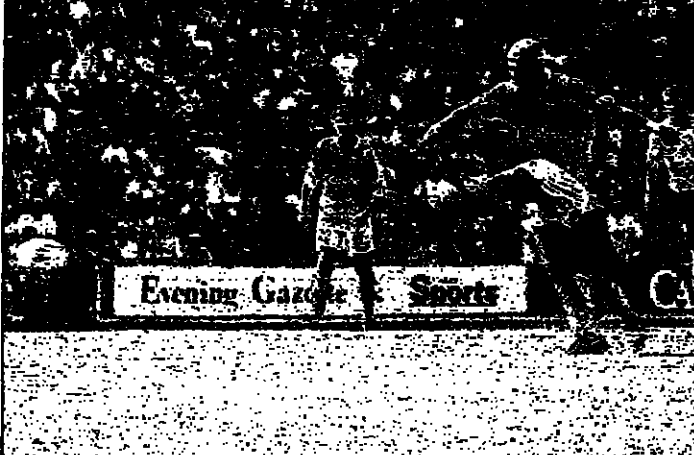
Thanks to the investments made in the 'Glorious Thirties', France is one of the best equipped countries as far as transport infrastructure is concerned. France has not yet experienced a British-style decline marked by massive dilapidation which worsens public transport. But the drastic reduction of the TGV programme is a kind of alarm signal. — *Le Monde*

TOMORROW

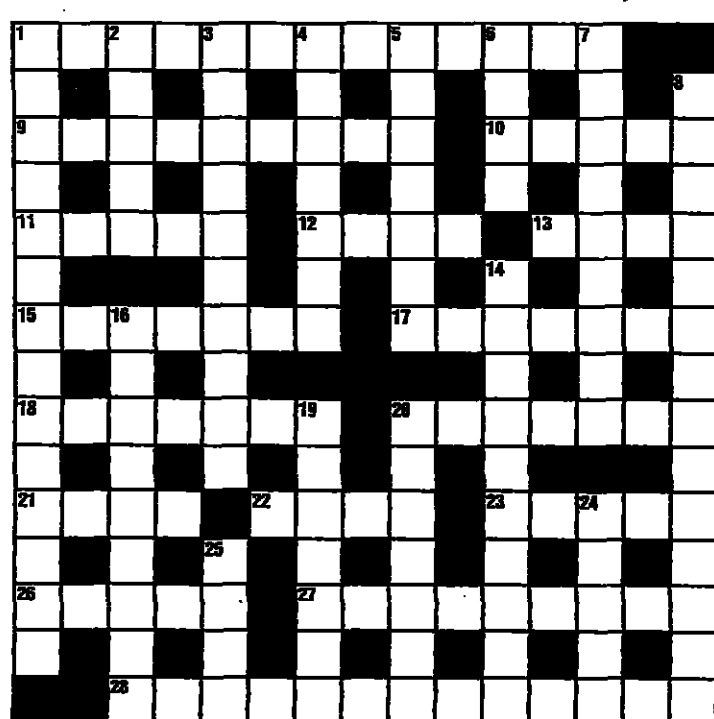
IN THE TIMES

SPORT
Lynne Truss on the foreign glamour-pusses of the Premiership

POP
David Sinclair on new albums by punks Skunk Anansie, and folk singer Shawn Colvin



THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,289



- ACROSS**
- 1 Invite round for report on high-level activities (5,8).
 - 9 Briefly have tiered changed for another dog (9).
 - 10 Mean to be charming (5).
 - 11 Having gained purpose, give a tip (5).
 - 12 Prepared an about-face (4).
 - 13 Air pollution finally kills cat (4).
 - 15 Boy holding map showing frozen north (7).
 - 17 Downfall of the Gods not by supposed author (7).
 - 18 One put in charge of collection, as clergyman virtually gets nothing right (7).
 - 20 Criticise one answer that could fix everything (7).
 - 21 Listen to hard rock (4).
 - 22 Quick read is inadequate - no conclusion reached (4).
- DOWN**
- 1 No straight talking in this Dickensian office (14).
 - 2 Tight nut that's becoming loose (5).
 - 3 Riding? Do get a form of insurance (5,5).
 - 4 Patient having expired? (7).
 - 5 Stopping a bottleneck? Super? (7).
 - 6 Bill - tip, too (4).
 - 7 Having trouble with joints in space over loft, we hear (9).
 - 8 Make wasted effort to sell an obsolete narcotic (4,1,4,5).
 - 14 Drift from Eton or Oxford to the City? (10).
 - 16 Left a piece of paper in office (9).
 - 19 To recover, it needs a sort of miracle (7).
 - 20 Cut out Scotch if another drink's provided (4,3).
 - 24 Very musical fool? Excellent! (5).
 - 25 Place fills completely? (4).

Solution to Puzzle No 20,288

SCRIBBLE VERBATIM
N E E S L E A
A L C O H O L I C
P R O S A I C P U B E R T Y
I R O T E A R
S T I L L R E V I L I N G
H N O E E T
D I A G N O S T I C
A C E R B I C C H E D D A R
U B A M I N E A
T O T E M A N T I T O X I C
C L B I V I L E
H A Y F I E L D C Y P R U S

Times Two Crossword page 48

THE TIMES WEATHER

For the latest region by region forecast, 24 hours a day, call 0800 500 500 followed by the appropriate code.

Greater London	701
Kent, Surrey, Sussex	702
Devon & Cornwall	703
Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Somerset	704
Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire	705
Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire	706
West Midlands & Shropshire	707
Shropshire, Herefordshire & Worcestershire	708
Stratford, Warwickshire & Warwick	709
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Stratford, Warwickshire & Warwick	726
Stratford, Warwickshire & Warwick	727

Weather is charged at 30p per minute (cheap rate) and 45p per minute at all other times.

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Kent, Surrey/Sussex/Hants	734
M25 London Orbital only	736
National traffic and roadworks	
National motorways	737
West Country	738
Wales	739
W Midlands	740
East Anglia	741
North-west England	742
North-east England	743
Scotland	744
Northern Ireland	745
PA Roadwatch is charged at 38p per minute (cheap rate) and 49p per minute at all other times	

INSIDE SECTION

2
TODAY



ARTS

Wessex and a singular girl: Jude hits the big screen
PAGES 35-37



TRAVEL

Tourist trade rolls with it as music lures the young
PAGES 40, 41



SPORT

The footballer who sings to a different tune
PAGES 42-48

TELEVISION AND RADIO

PAGES 46, 47

BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook

THURSDAY OCTOBER 3 1996

Success for Eurotunnel with £4bn rescue package

By JONATHAN PEYNN
TRANSPORT CORRESPONDENT

EUROTUNNEL'S dramatic 18-month struggle for survival appeared to have ended in success yesterday when the company clinched a £4 billion refinancing package with its banks, averting the threat of insolvency.

Sir Alastair Morton and Patrick Ponsolle, Eurotunnel's co-chairmen, called a hurriedly convened emergency board meeting to ap-

prove the plan last night after the breakthrough.

The deal, which could eventually give the 25 banks 70 per cent or more of the equity, involves an immediate swap of debt for equity that gives the banks an initial 49 per cent control.

Although the deal lifts much of the short-term uncertainty hanging over the company, the shares are likely to fall sharply when trading reopens next week because of the scale of the dilution.

The shares were suspended at 114p on Monday after a sudden narrowing of the gap between the two sides in talks over the weekend.

The complex package is believed to involve a £1.5 billion swap at a conversion price of around 160p. A bond issue, thought to be convertible at 265p, could wipe out a further £2.5 billion of borrowings, bringing the total outstanding debt to manageable proportions.

Other components of the package include a cocktail of warrants,

bonds and convertible loans. Some City analysts, however, remained deeply pessimistic about the prospects for shareholders. Richard Hannah of UBS Phillips & Drew, said the underlying value of the shares was just a handful of pence.

The value of the expected cash flows of about £5 billion to £6 billion during the lifetime of the concession compared with the £9 billion debt and £3 billion of equity that had been pumped into Eurotunnel, he said. "In those circumstances you would

normally regard the shares as worthless."

However, other commentators said the fall in the share price would be limited by the loyalty of the existing shareholder base, the vast bulk of which comprises small shareholders in France.

The remaining 135,000 UK shareholders were also unlikely to sell because "they hold the shares for the travel privileges not for the prospect of making a fortune," said one City source. A number of crucial hurdles

remain before the future of Eurotunnel is finally secured. The 26 instructing banks meet this week to discuss the proposals and must persuade the rest of the £9 billion syndicate to accept.

One rogue bank voting against them could place the survival scheme in jeopardy. In addition, two thirds of the 745,000 Eurotunnel shareholders, many of whom have been deeply critical of the course that the rescue talks have taken, must also approve the terms.

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES

FTSE 100	4011.3	(+22.9)
Yield	3.90%	
FTSE All share	1971.25	(+10.85)
Nikkei	21498.60	(+38.63)
New York		
Dow Jones	5922.42	(+17.52)
S&P Composite	682.14	(+3.08)

US RATE

Federal Funds	5 1/4%	(5 1/4%)
Long Bond	9 3/4%	(9 3/4%)
Yield	8.85%	(8.85%)

LONDON MONEY

3-month interbank	5 1/4%	(5 1/4%)
Life long gilt	110 1/2	(109 1/2)
Future (Dec)		

STERLING

New York	1.5692*	(1.5648)
London	1.5675	(1.5648)
DM	2.3945	(2.3872)
FF	6.1095	(6.0943)
Sfr	1.3623	(1.3614)
Yen	175.17	(174.13)
S index	87.3	(87.0)

\$\$\$ DOLLAR

London	1.5295*	(1.5263)
DM	5.1766*	(5.1685)
Sfr	1.2647*	(1.2647)
Yen	111.67*	(111.43)
S index	97.6	(97.5)

Tokyo close Yen 111.81

NORTH SEA OIL

Brent 15-day (Dec)	\$22.75	(\$22.60)
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GOLD

London close	\$380.50	(\$378.65)
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* denotes midday trading price

Shares close above 4,000

By JANET BUSH
ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT

LONDON'S FT-SE 100 index closed above 4,000 for the first time yesterday, buoyed by strength in the dollar and on Wall Street and by a positive reaction in the financial markets to Tony Blair's address on Tuesday to the Labour Party conference.

The FT-SE ended 22.9 points higher, at 4,011.3, a record for the second day running. The index has now rallied around 380 points — more than 10 per cent — since its 1996 low in July.

New records were also achieved in Frankfurt and Amsterdam. On Wall Street, the Dow Jones industrial average made early gains.

Stock markets around the world have largely been benefiting from developments in America, with the dollar touching its highest levels since early 1994, and bonds profiting from a perception that inflationary pressures there remain weak and that interest rates, therefore, will remain low.

This positive effect has been compounded by the continuing troubles of Japan's economy and talk of large outflows of Japanese investment into foreign assets.

But in Britain there was an added ingredient to yesterday's buying, with government bond traders talking about "the Blair effect". The index finished around a full point higher, partly boosted by receding fears about a Labour government. Traders were impressed by the business-friendly tone of the Labour leader's conference speech and the promise of fiscal and price discipline from Gordon Brown, the Shadow Chancellor, in his speech on Monday.

Sterling rallied to end at 87.3 on its index against a basket of currencies — after having closed at 87.0 on Tuesday — and hit a three-and-a-half year high against the yen. The dollar briefly rose above ¥112, a two-and-a-half year high.

Britain's official reserves fell by an underlying \$113 million in September.

Pennington, page 27
Markets, page 28

Share bonanza awaits Norwich Union voters

By MARIANNE CURPHEY

ALMOST three million investors and policyholders will receive an average £500 of free shares from Norwich Union when it floats on the stock market next summer.

It will be the first flotation by a mutually-owned UK life insurer and will create a company worth between £3 billion and £4 billion. This will give it a value similar to that of Legal & General, but smaller than the Prudential or Commercial Union.

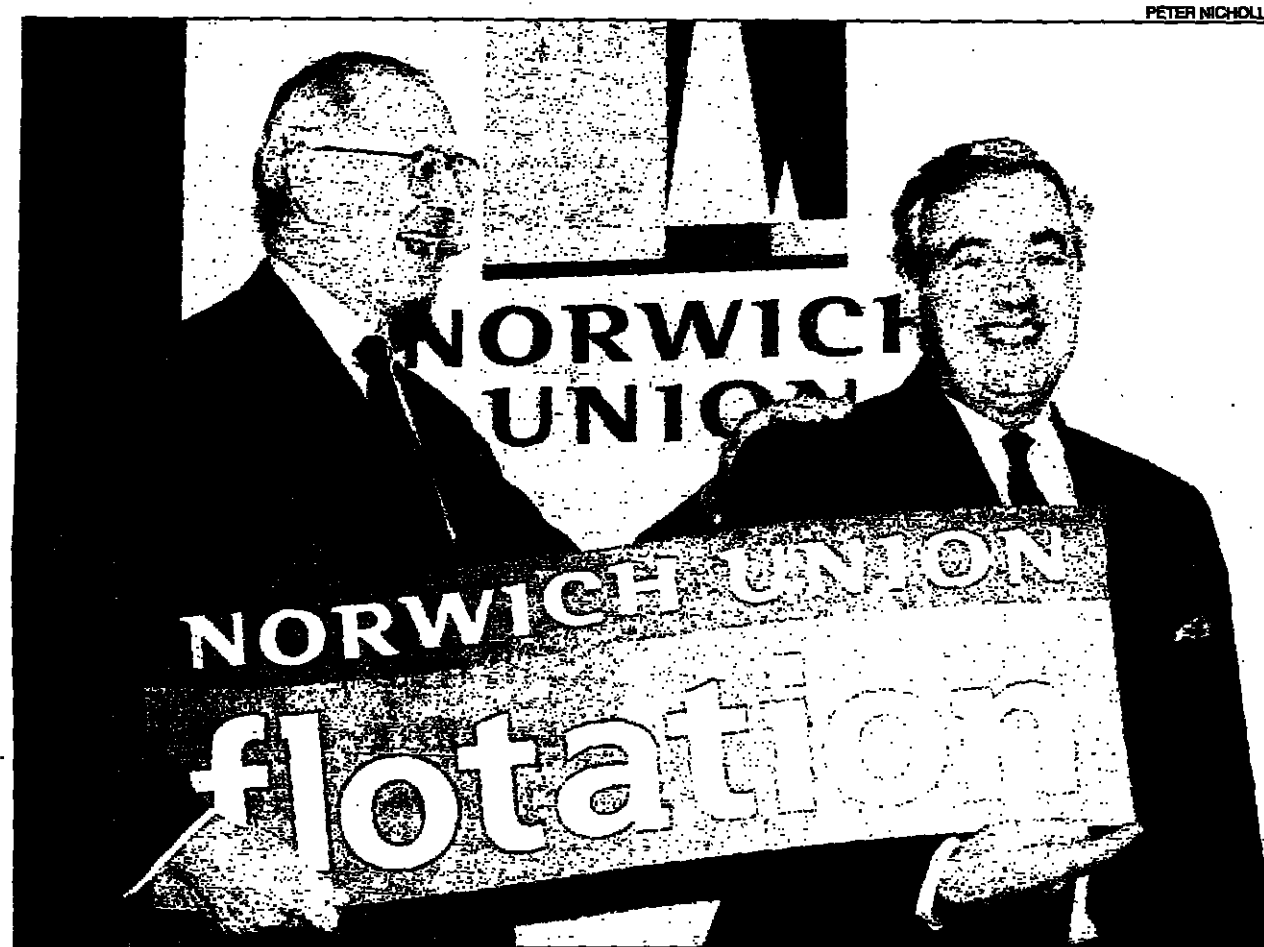
A wide range of policyholders will be included in the windfall payouts. Most holders of life, pensions and annuity plans will benefit, including holders of life insurance non-profit plans, a category often neglected in payouts. But holders of motor, household or health insurance policies, unit trusts and Peps will not qualify.

Each qualifying member will receive a fixed number of free shares. Qualifying members with one or more with-profit policies will receive an extra allocation of shares depending on the type and age of policy. All qualifying members will be given preferential rights to subscribe cash for further shares.

Though the average payout will be £500, some policyholders will receive far more, while others, for example those with low-value term assurance, may receive less than £100.

NU is the UK's second-largest mutual insurance company after Standard Life, with £40 billion in funds under management and £4.7 billion of worldwide gross premium in 1995.

It will send out further details of the flotation next spring, after which members will vote. The insurer will need a venue large enough to hold



Floating voters: George Paul, left, Norwich Union chairman, with Allan Bridgewater, chief executive, yesterday

tens of thousands of investors, and the London Arena is being considered. If, as expected, the plans are approved, the mutual will become a public company by June, 19 months after the rumours first began.

Flotation will involve radical restructuring and the creation of a new holding company, Norwich Union plc. Allan Bridgewater, chief executive, believes that the group has been held back from expansion because it has been restricted in its access to

capital. He proposes to separate the life fund from the general insurance business. This move will protect the life fund from the volatility of the insurance market, and give the company the freedom to make more adventurous investments.

The group is expected to raise an estimated £2 billion of new capital from the stock market and pay around £1.5 billion to policyholders.

Mr Bridgewater said new NU policies taken on from

October 3 onwards would not qualify, nor would second-hand NU life policies. Members who die or whose policies mature before the vote, will receive an extra bonus, worth 3 per cent of the final value of the policy.

A fixed number of free shares will also be paid to each employee and pensioner. The directors of the society have waived their entitlement to this allocation.

A number of companies are believed to have contacted NU

after rumours about a flotation began circulating. However, analysts believe that a hostile bid for NU would cost a predator £5 billion, a price that few could afford.

Roman Cizdyn, insurance analyst with Merrill Lynch, said that the City's main fear was that NU might use its spare cash to make acquisitions that would not add value to the company.

Tempus, page 28
City Diary, page 29

Decision soon on BA tie to American

By JON ASHWORTH

THE Office of Fair Trading has completed its long-awaited report on the proposed alliance between British Airways and American Airlines.

The report has been passed to Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade, who must decide whether to refer the alliance to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Such a move would almost certainly prove the death-knell of the link-up.

The airlines have argued that pooling their services on the competitive North American routes will free up the market and benefit consumers. Greater competition would rely on the signing of an "open skies" accord between the UK and America.

Rivals, including United Airlines, Delta and Richard Branson's Virgin Atlantic, have argued that a BA-American alliance would create a stranglehold on the key transatlantic routes.

BA and American had hoped to launch a combined service in April, pooling frequent-flyer schemes and offering a "shuttle-like" service to cities like New York and Chicago. Whatever the outcome, the airlines will not meet the April deadline.

Mr Lang is expected to announce his decision in the next six days. The consensus is that he is likely to decide against a monopolies referral, subject to concessions by BA on prime-time slots at Heathrow. Access to Heathrow is one of the main issues raised by US airlines seeking a foothold in the UK.

The DTT confirmed that it had received the OFT report, but would not be drawn on the content.

BA surprise, page 26

Injunction threat to Camelot

By GEORGE SIVELL

OFT, the National Lottery regulator, is contemplating a court injunction against Camelot, the operator, over failure to meet commitments on equipping retail outlets.

Peter Davis, the regulator, is concerned by Camelot's failure to install the number of scratchcard verifying machines in shops over a number of months as specified in Camelot's licence.

Oftot says Camelot had missed its target by around 300 scratchcard-only retail outlets in March and about 750 in June.

Mr Davis said: "I am very concerned that Camelot has failed to meet its licence commitments and failed at first to provide accurate information to my office."

Camelot has told Oftot that the problem was due to an overestimation. It said: "We are now back on course to meet the December target."

HoF faces \$1m legal action

By JON ASHWORTH

HOUSE OF FRASER, the troubled stores group, is being sued for more than \$1.1 million by an American clothing company in connection with various consignments of goods last year. Calvin Klein Jeanswear, which makes Calvin Klein branded jeans under licence, is demanding payment plus interest in the action, outlined in a writ lodged at the High Court in London.

Calvin Klein Jeanswear is a subsidiary of Designer Holdings, a quoted US company,

and is not part of the Calvin Klein fashion empire. It is suing House of Fraser (Stores), based in Glasgow, claiming \$1.15 million, representing the balance of the price of goods sold and delivered to House of Fraser, plus interest. The writ details amounts in invoices between January and November 1995.

The move is a further embarrassment to House of Fraser, which this week announced plans to close up to ten stores — threatening hun-

dreds of jobs — to try to revive the group, spun-off from the Fayed empire, and its Harrod's flagship, in a flotation in 1994, employs 9,000 staff in 51 stores across the UK.

Calvin Klein Jeanswear has been aggressively pursuing American retailers selling counterfeit Calvin Klein clothing. There is no suggestion that House of Fraser is involved in such activities.

House of Fraser was unavailable for comment on the writ yesterday.



Peel: more capacity

City prickly on Thistle price

By JON ASHWORTH

SHARES in Thistle Hotels, Britain's second-largest hotel group, have been priced at 170p, bottom of the indicated range of 170p to 210p reflecting City sentiment that the offer was too expensive.

There are also fears of a glut of hotel offerings. One analyst said: "The general perception was that it was quite an expensive offering on measures such as cash flow, historic return on capital and normalised earnings before depreciation and tax."

The shares opened at 172 1/2p, a slight premium, when conditional dealings began yesterday.

Brierley Investments, the New Zealand company that owns 70 per cent of Thistle, said the issue had been priced to ensure "the float gets away positively".

At 170p, Thistle is valued at £1.05 billion. The offer will raise about £238 million, net of expenses, and allow Brierley to reduce its stake to 46 per cent. Robert Peel, chief

executive, said: "The group's strengthened financial position will support ongoing refurbishment and expansion of room capacity."

The Thistle offer is worth £360 million, of which £250 million is from shares issued by the company. The balance comes from Brierley, and the two investment arms of the Singapore Government.

Thistle owns 100 hotels and is Scotland's largest hotelier.

Pennington, page 27

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BA faces Israeli legal threat over fares

FROM ROSS DUNN
IN JERUSALEM

BRITISH AIRWAYS yesterday declared its surprise that Israel had threatened to take it to court over the airline's new cut-price fare promotion.

Under the promotion, the purchaser of a British Airways ticket from Israel to London is entitled to buy a companion ticket to non-European destinations, including Asia, the US and South America, at half the normal fare.

The arrangement would allow Israelis to fly via London to other countries at much cheaper prices than those offered by other airlines for direct flights to a number of major destinations.

One BA official said that the Israeli Ministry of Transportation had issued such warnings last year against a similar fare promotion and, in the end, no action was taken against the airline.

However, Menachem Sharon, director general of Israel's Civil Aviation Authority, insisted that the promotion be halted immediately or British Airways would face the consequences. He said: "If tickets are sold, we will take legal steps."

Mr Sharon told journalists that the airline was in clear breach of the aviation agreement between the two countries, which requires Israeli approval of the British carrier's fares, even to third destinations. He said the latest promotion would hurt not only El Al, Israel's state-owned national carrier, but also American airlines that fly to Tel Aviv, such as TWA.

Mr Sharon said he believed the fares offered between Israel and the US were already reasonable and the market did not need to be more competitive. He noted that in the past two years, two American airlines, World Airways and Delta Airlines, had ceased their flights to Tel Aviv because of the lack of profits.

Cairn seeks to take Command for £185m



CAIRN ENERGY, the oil exploration group, said yesterday that it intends to make a £185 million offer for Command Petroleum, an exploration and production company listed on the Australian stock exchange (Oliver August writes). Cairn's shares jumped 22p to 394½p on the news. The group plans

to partly finance the acquisition through a one-for-three rights issue at 300p per share. Command's main producing asset is a 22.5 per cent interest in the Ravva oil field, offshore India. In addition, it has interests in Yemen, Russia, Tunisia and Papua New Guinea and a royalty interest in two blocks in

Mongolia. Command has recently announced proved and probable net reserves of 58 million barrels of oil equivalent.

Pictured are Mike Watts, left, general manager of exploration at Cairn, Agnes Macleod, finance director, and Bill Gammell, chief executive.

Butte Mining gives pledge to turn declared profit into loss

BY GEORGE SIVELL

THE Financial Reporting Review Panel has struck at Butte Mining's declared profit for the last full year of trading, turning it into a loss.

Butte's directors have promised the watchdog that examinations of company reports and accounts to release figures for the year to end June 1995. They will show a loss of £628,000 instead of the profit before and after tax of £339,000 that was reported in December.

It is understood that there will be no proceedings against the directors. At issue was the accounting treatment of

shares held by Butte in Gem River Corporation, a stock listed on the Alberta Stock Exchange in Canada. Butte received the shares in Gem River for services rendered and took a profit on the whole transaction into its figures.

But the FRFP maintains that profit should only have been taken on the shares that had been sold by the date on which the accounts were drawn up. The remaining shares were subject to an agreement prohibiting their trading on the Alberta exchange until conditions relating to the success of a Gem

River mining operation were fulfilled and a specified period of time had elapsed.

The FRFP wrote in its adjudication: "In the Panel's view the ultimate cash realisation of these shares could not be assessed with reasonable certainty and profit should not have been recognised on this element. A consequent downward adjustment is also needed to the turnover figure at present published."

The FRFP says that the revised accounts will also provide some clarification of the position of the non-equity shareholders in respect of the

dividend attaching to the company's convertible cumulative redeemable preference shares.

The 1985 Companies Act requires that any item included in annual reports and accounts should be determined on a prudent basis, and "only profits realised at the balance sheet date shall be included in the profit and loss account".

The accounting standard SSAP 2 defines prudence by stating "revenues and profits are not anticipated but are realised by inclusion in the profit and loss account only when realised in the form of cash or other assets, the ultimate cash realisation of which can be assessed with reasonable certainty".

The FRFP was at pains to emphasise yesterday that it does not scrutinise public company accounts for defects but acts on those that are drawn to its attention either directly or indirectly. It also pointed out that where it finds that accounts are defective it will endeavour to secure their revision by voluntary means, but if this approach fails it will make an application to the courts for an order compelling a revision. So far it has never had to make an application.

Small firms face more red tape

BY NOEL FUNG

THE red tape burden on small businesses is costing companies 2 per cent of their turnover, or the equivalent of hiring an extra member of staff, according to a study by the Forum of Private Business.

The forum urges government agencies to work more closely together and bring all business regulation into a single inspectorate, to ease the difficulties for small organisations.

A growing concern about the problem is highlighted in the report, called *The Impact of Red Tape on the Owner-Managed Business: A Year-long Study*.

It says the bulk of the cost in complying with red tape is spent on setting up new procedures, and maintaining the information and systems for compliance.

In the study, 92 business owners were tracked for a year from July 1995, recording the regular and one-off forms they filled and their contacts with the government.

The findings echoed the forum's quarterly surveys, which showed an increasing percentage of respondents identified red tape as their single most important problem.

Building in US recovers

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

NEW construction spending in America rebounded in August from a July drop, the Commerce Department said yesterday, as private builders picked up the slack from a slumping public sector.

Total spending on new projects rose 0.9 per cent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of \$562.1 billion in August, recovering most of a 1.1 per cent decline in July, revised from 1.4 per cent.

All the increase in August spending occurred in the private sector, where outlays increased 1.3 per cent to a rate of \$423.4 billion after a 1.2 per cent decline in July.

By contrast, public, or taxpayer-financed, building projects recorded a third consecutive monthly drop, falling 0.2 per cent in July and 0.3 per cent in June.

Analysts said the pickup in August building was not robust enough to alter the picture of a slowing economy in the final six months of this year. Most expect second-half growth to ease to an annual rate of about 2.5 per cent from the second quarter's 4.7 per cent surge, when national output was rising at its fastest in two years.

Irish Government in the black as tax income soars

FROM EILEEN McCABE IN DUBLIN

SOARING tax revenues have put the Irish Republic's Government in the black this autumn for the first time in more than 30 years, Ruairi Quinn, Finance Minister, said yesterday.

The current and capital inflows for the first nine months of 1996 exceeded spending by a cumulative £158 million, the Department of Finance said. The figures, beating the most optimistic of analysts' forecasts, give Mr Quinn extra scope to cut personal tax in next February's budget.

Mr Quinn said: "The Irish economy's true potential for growth is now being realised and the revenue buoyancy deriving from increased employment and strong consumer confidence is enabling further consolidation of our public finances."

However, the minister dampened expectations of a bonanza budget, saying that the progress made by the Irish economy could easily be dissipated under less favourable economic conditions. He said: "The Government's budgetary policy thus requires continued tight control of public spend-

ing... if we are to secure an equitable distribution of the fruit of growth while remaining comfortably below the three per cent General Government Deficit constraint through 1997, which is the key year for determining our eligibility for EMU, and beyond."

The Government's target Exchequer Borrowing Requirement is £1729 million, but Mr Quinn said that performance so far suggests that significant improvement is in prospect. Some analysts believe that the full-year EBR may not exceed £1500 million.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Floats and takeovers reach record levels

STOCK MARKET floatations and takeovers reached record levels in the first nine months of the year, according to two surveys published yesterday. However, KPMG's corporate finance survey says that investors are now applying the brakes on floatations. KPMG estimates that in the first nine months of the year more than £8 billion was raised from new issues but says: "Investors are starting to balk at the prices on offer, so activity in the final quarter is expected to tail off."

It also blames the disappointing performance of some newly listed companies for its forecast of a slowdown.

Acquisitions Monthly says the value of takeover bids reached £42.6 billion in the first nine months of 1996, comfortably ahead of £40.3 billion at the same stage of 1995, a record year. Rothschilds, the merchant bank, is heading the league table of deals handled and UBS, the Swiss Bank, completed the highest number of deals in the first nine months. The publication believes the value of fees paid to advisers for takeover bids over the year could exceed £1 billion for the first time, "making this year the most lucrative yet for bankers, brokers, accountants, lawyers and public relations consultants."

Pennington, page 27

Johnston slides

JOHNSTON, the construction and engineering group, spent £340,000 defending itself against June's hostile tender offer from TT Group. That added to difficult trading conditions in the six months to June 30, a period that saw pre-tax profits drop to £1.65 million, against £3.79 million last time. Earnings fell to 7.5p per share, against 22.67p, but the interim dividend rose from 4p to 4.5p, due on December 12. Johnston's shares, for which TT Group was offering 500p, held at 465p yesterday.

Pegasus ends Sage talks

PEGASUS, the accounting software company, yesterday withdrew from merger talks with the rival Sage group. The Pegasus board said that Sage's conditional offer, which was increased during the negotiations, "undervalues Pegasus's excellent medium-term trading prospects and the significant benefits which would accrue to Sage from a combination of the two businesses". Pegasus also concluded that the acquisition would almost certainly have been referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

'Ethical charter' plan

SAINSBURY and the Co-op are launching an "ethical charter" for their suppliers in a bid to sever ties with Third World employers who subject their workers to unacceptable working conditions. The scheme, co-ordinated by the Trade Fair Foundation, will ask own-brand suppliers to commit to a range of ethical standards, which will be set by March next year. The first phase of the charter will apply to fewer than a dozen products coming from the Far East and South Africa. It is not expected to come into effect until 1998.

Maxwell action

ADMINISTRATORS of Maxwell Communication Corporation have issued proceedings against a former Maxwell entity, seeking £7.3 million plus interest. Price Waterhouse initiated the action against Maxwell Financial Trust on October 1. The claim, part of a "mopping up" exercise involving the Maxwell group of companies, centres on a dividend for £7.3 million paid to MFT in October 1990. Price Waterhouse says the defendant is liable as a constructive trustee and seeks return of the money plus interest.

Camas expands in US

CAMAS, the building materials group, has expanded its US operations with the acquisition of Model Stone of Minneapolis for £20 million. Model Stone has four ready mix plants, and a fifth under construction, a block plant and sand and gravel reserves. These operations are said to fit with Camas' vertical integration strategy at its Denver base. Net assets of the acquisition amount to £17 million and goodwill £5 million. Model Stone made pre-tax profits (restated) of £2.4 million in 1995 on turnover of £28 million.

Thames Water sells

THAMES WATER sold a large part of its design and contracting business yesterday to Black and Veatch, of Missouri, as part of its reorganisation to withdraw from design and construction. The utility company disposed of Prova Consulting, Uttag Umwelttechnik and PWT Projects. Thames is focusing on its core utility business in the UK and on its international and other long-term operating contracts internationally. The amount involved was within the £67 million exceptional item in the preliminary results.

Ardagh profits up

THE hot summer of 1995 boosted the sale of beer and soft drinks in Ireland and pushed up pre-tax profits at Ardagh, the Irish glass company, said yesterday. The Dublin company recorded full-year pre-tax profits to June 1996 of £15.81 million (£15.81 million). Earnings per share increased 9.3 per cent to £1.481p and a final dividend of £1.36pence is payable on November 25. A rise in volume sales and productivity gains offset the pressure caused by the continuing weakness in sterling. Trading this year was satisfactory.

Time Products soars

TIME PRODUCTS, the watch distributors, reported a 63 per cent increase in pre-tax profit for the first six months, with the prospect of another sales boost before Christmas. At July 30, pre-tax profit stood at £9.1 million, up from £5.5 million. Earnings per share rose to 11.29p, from 7.02p, and the interim dividend was raised by 1p to 4.5p. Marcus Margulies, chairman, said all divisions were showing improvement, with a particularly strong performance from luxury watches and progress being made in North America.

TOURIST RATES

	Bank Buys	Bank Sells
Australia \$	2.07	1.91
Austria Sch	17.78	16.28
Belgium Fr	52.10	47.85
Canada \$	2.238	2.075
Cyprus Cyp£	0.763	0.708
Denmark Kr	9.22	8.52
Finland Mk	7.71	7.26
France Fr	8.48	7.85
Germany Dm	2.54	2.33
Greece Dr	382	367
Hong Kong \$	12.74	11.91
Ireland £	1.15	1.06
Israel Sh	1.03	0.95
Italy Lit	2.38	2.16
Japan Yen	169.00	157.00
Netherlands Gld	2.828	2.598
New Zealand \$	1.693	1.553
Norway Kr	10.71	9.91
Poland Zloty	203.50	184.50
Spain Ptas	163.63	150.93
Sweden Kr	10.99	10.19
Switzerland Fr	2.05	1.91
Turkey Lira	140.29	129.09
USA \$	1.693	1.553

Rates for small denomination bank notes only as supplied by Barclays Bank PLC. Different rates apply to travellers' cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

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صحة من الأول

□ Endgame at BTR boardroom □ Brierley checks in for the long term □ Will 1996 prove a record year?

Change of the old guard

SIR Owen Green could never quite see the point of non-executives, who were just another unnecessary expense — and BTR, the conglomerate he built up, was based on rigorous control of costs. During its glory days he could cheerfully ignore Cadbury, Greenbury and the rest, or at least those parts of them he disagreed with, because success brought its own immunity from political correctness. So the reward for years of loyal service in the boardroom, when the firm's retirement age of 60 came around, was a non-executive seat. Why import outsiders who know nothing of the business, Sir Owen argued, not unreasonably, when you have a ready supply of insiders who do? This is why BTR finds itself with five out of seven non-execs who are former executives, four of them company men with long-time service records that average 29 years apiece. All terribly non-Cadbury, frightfully non-PC, which is why a fascinating little endgame is being played out within the BTR boardroom.

The Cadbury report on corporate governance stresses the need for non-executives to be independent, which the BTR Four palpably are not. It also urges regular shuffling of non-executives to prevent them going native and losing their independence. The warning of BTR's fortunes since Sir Owen's day — he left in May 1993 — has required the group to bow to the prevailing winds, and Norman Ireland, Sir Owen's successor as chairman, two years ago started to bring in outsiders, along with a new chief executive, Ian Strachan from RTZ.

But the BTR Four are still there. One, theoretically, could still be there in the year 2008 according to the company's articles of association, if his re-election to a three-year term manages to come just before his 65th birthday. BTR has made it known, unofficially, that their time may be limited. Mr Strachan's huge restructuring programme, at a cost of £622 million in write-offs, has been the priority this summer. He and his team will shortly embark on a lengthy series of meetings with institutions, at which the matter of the non-executives will probably be raised. It is whispered, who knows with how much justification, that those shareholders want change. Unofficial promises of the removal of the remains of the old guard will doubtless be made. Political correctness, or this year's version thereof, will one day prevail.



And yet, and yet, Mr Strachan enjoys the City's backing but he is an outsider, new to BTR's ways. The BTR Four do have all those years of experience. Non-executives should be a check on the power of the executives, on behalf of the shareholders. Are the latter's interests best served by the retention of one or more of the Four, given they can be relied to stand up to Mr Strachan? Or by the appointment of new non-executives who might be more to his taste? One could argue it either way.

that they were too high. This is part of the usual ritual surrounding any new issue, but the City distrust seems well-founded. Earnings were boosted by a low tax level, but it was the depreciation policy that caused most concern. This is always a controversial issue for hotels, and Thistle has taken a more optimistic view than most on the life expectation of its assets. As one example, soft furnishings had been depreciated over 15 years, clearly a nonsense as curtains and the like at four-star hotels can hardly be expected to last this long. Thistle brought in a new policy for the flotation, taking this down to ten years, but this is still twice as long as at comparable businesses. A low depreciation charge enhances earnings, so pushing up the value put on the shares. This is not to say the valuation of Thistle was massaged, but simply that the City took its own view, and this view prevailed. At their current level the shares look good value. The demographics remain the same, there is still a shortage of rooms in London, and the hotels cycle is some way off its peak. Private shareholders receiving their certificates next week should just be glad they did not have to pay 210p for them.

Hat trick not yet in the bag
□ IF THE optimists are right, it could be a record year for stock markets, for new issues and for mergers and acquisitions. This hat trick may require a last frantic scramble before the dull days of a Labour government, but it will set a few fund managers, corporate financiers and businessmen up in style, with little to do but spend their amassed bonuses and sale proceeds until the administration is once more to their liking. Or not. The stock markets, both here and on Wall Street, could do anything between now and Christmas, and anyone who attempts to predict short-term trends is talking through their hat. Long term, the view is clearer: anyone short on equities for any significant period since the War has regretted it, and there is no reason, in terms of

companies' profitability, why this trend should change. As to corporate activity, the rush of flotations is definitely drying up; wide Thistle, investors are cautious. Any fund manager asked to pay some of the prices on offer will inevitably worry about the effect on his portfolio, and his year-end bonus, of a sharp pre-Christmas reverse. The level of the markets does not encourage takeovers either. M&A work in the last quarter of 1995 was something like £20 billion, a figure that needs to be exceeded if 1996 is to be another record year. Common sense suggests it will not; but City bonuses will be healthy enough anyway, thank you.

Chaos postponed
□ OFFICIAL: the markets are safe for now. Among next spring's crop of business books is *The Edge of Chaos* by Bertalan Cohen, who writes a diary column for the financial pages of a Sunday newspaper. This looks at the application of chaos theory, that deeply fashionable if generally misunderstood branch of physics, to the world of finance. It also promises, says the publisher's blurb, to forecast the next market crash. The publication date has been altered by hand in the catalogue, put back four months to February.

Strategy pays off for Bank of Scotland

By ROBERT MILLER

THE Governor of the Bank of Scotland pointed to a 24 per cent rise in half-year profits, to a record £324.3 million, as testimony to the success of its policy to expand operations in Australia and New Zealand rather than buy a UK building society. Sir Bruce Patullo yesterday said that the Bank of Scotland has successfully expanded its retail savings and loans operations without having had to resort to an expensive acquisition. He added: "We do not need a building society to generate a stream of new mortgage business."

On the back of a highly profitable six months to August 31, Sir Bruce said the bank was raising the half-time dividend, payable on November 29, to 2.91p (2.45p). Sir Bruce admitted that the decision by Standard Life this summer to sell 30 per cent of its 32.8 per cent stake in the bank had hurt and added that he believed it would turn out to be a wrong decision. Buyers of the Standard Life holding included UBS, the merchant bank, for distribution among a number of its funds. Broken-down Bank of Scotland increased its pre-tax profits to £190.4 million from £183.2 million last time, while British Linen Bank saw a £1 million decline in its contribution to £7 million. Bank of Western Australia (BankWest), acquired this year, chipped in with £38.9 million, and Countrywide Banking Corporation in New Zealand made a profit of £19 million (£13.5 million). Bank of Wales more than doubled its contribution to £3.3 million. Operating expenses rose 34 per cent to £458.5 million, but the bank said this largely arose from the first time inclusion of a full half year of operating expenses from BankWest, which amounted to £63.6 million. Excluding BankWest's operating expenses, the year-on-year increase would have been 15 per cent. The key cost-to-income ratio rose to 52.9 per cent, against 50.3 per cent last time and a healthy 48 per cent two years ago. However, Sir Bruce said that there is plenty of room to cut costs, particularly in the Australian operation, where the key ratio was higher than 60 per cent. Sir Bruce said: "These results were achieved against generally benign economic conditions in the UK and USA, with slightly more difficult conditions in Australia and New Zealand."

Tempus, page 28

HTV offers welcome to right bid

By ERIC REGULY

HTV, the ITV company in the West of England and Wales that is a perennial takeover candidate, said that it is not guarding its independence but has received no offers from potential bidders. Chris Rowlands, chief executive, said that he would "welcome with open arms" an offer at the right price. Carlton Communications and United News & Media are thought the likeliest bidders, though both unlikely to act at the current share price. HTV shares closed at 352p, down 1½p, against a 52-week low of 248p. HTV reported pre-tax profits of £6.7 million, up 10 per cent, for the half year to June 30, on turnover of £69.1 million, up 4 per cent. Tight cost control and better performance by Harvest Entertainment, the new rights division, were behind the improved results. The interim dividend, payable on November 15, rises by 12 per cent, to 1.4p.

Blenheim silent on bid talks

By FRASER NELSON

BLENHIM, the exhibitions group, kept silent yesterday about the progress in its takeover talks with Reed Elsevier, as it unveiled a strong set of half-year results. Neville Buch, chairman, said its interim pre-tax profits of £30.7 million (£13.1 million) showed that the benefits of its management restructuring were taking effect earlier than expected, although the full impact would not be felt until 1997. Analysts said the results should provide a powerful bargaining tool in the takeover talks with Reed, which is understood to be offering 480p for each Blenheim share. Mr Buch is believed to be holding out for a 500p-per-share bid, which would value his company at £465 million. Blenheim's full-year profits are expected to be £38 million, and with more bi-annual exhibitions in 1997 are forecast to rise to £48 million next year.

JJB a Euro 96 winner

By FRASER NELSON

THE Summer of Sport boosted profits at JJB Sports, with the retailer selling a record 25,000 England football kits in the four weeks before the semi-finals of the Euro 96 Championship. In the six months to July 31 extra demand created by the summer's sporting events helped pre-tax profits to £7.25 million (£4.82 million) on sales

of £55.2 million (£37.5 million). David Whelan, chairman, said the company had seen a 28 per cent rise in like-for-like sales in the first eight weeks of the second half, which he put down to underlying demand for sports accessories. Earnings were 5.03p a share (3.45p) and an interim dividend of 1.5p (0.93p), due December 10, was declared.

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THE TIMES CITY DIARY

Royal Mail first past post

GOOD news, at last, for Royal Mail, after its relay race yesterday with Norwich Union. Around 80 per cent of the insurer's three million policyholders received the announcement of the proposed flotation and welcome windfall in their morning post, either before or at the same time as the official announcement was made in the City. Cornflakes will never taste the same again for the chief executive, Allan Bridgewater.

Wembley woe

DAVE WHELAN, chairman of JJB Sports, was back at Wembley Stadium yesterday for the first time since he was carried off the hallowed turf with a broken leg in 1960. It was after playing for Blackburn Rovers against Wolverhampton Wanderers, who eventually won 3-0, that Whelan picked up enough injury money to start his business. There was no silver lining yesterday, however. The team from JJB Sports lost to JD Sports, Dixons, and Cobra in the Umbro Tournament.

BA dress sense

SIR COLIN MARSHALL and Robert Ayling, chairman and chief executive of British Airways, could soon be sporting chunky-knit sweaters à la Richard Branson. BA has bowed to the inevitable and is allowing staff and their families who travel on discount tickets to dress in mufti. Until now a strict dress code was rigorously enforced. Welcome to the 20th century, BA.

Gammell scores

AT LAST, victory is in sight for Bill Gammell, chief executive of Cairn Energy and a former Scottish international rugby player. Gammell, who grew up with Tony Blair at Fettes College, Edinburgh, and studiously avoided the rugby pitch while at school, never once scored a try against the Australians. However, he got his own back yesterday, when Cairn Energy bid £190 million for Command Petroleum, a listed company in Australia.



"It used to be called Eurotunnel"

Takes the cake

BOSSES from Rolls-Royce, Coopers & Lybrand and Warburtons will sit down for supper at The Savoy in the company of a two-year-old cake. The cake, made for the memorial service for the late cricket commentator Brian Johnston, will be wheeled out again tonight at The Cricketers' Ball, in aid of The Brian Johnston Memorial Fund. John Major has, unfortunately, declined his invitation to join diners and the defrosted cake.

AFTER famously stalking out of a Downing Street Cabinet meeting, Michael Heseltine's subsequent departure from the Department of Trade and Industry appears to have been less spectacular. Speaking at a presentation ceremony at the Dorchester to mark City watchdog Imro's entry into the Investors in People (IIP) scheme, he came clean: "I committed the DTI to IIP and then I got shuffled out of the way." So now we know.

MORAG PRESTON

State pension is touchstone for the Utilitarian Party



GRAHAM SEAFJEANT

Odd, you may think, that the first muffled outbreak of dissent at Labour's conference should come over the politically yawn-making topic of pensions. The subject is, however, highly charged for Labour. Back at the 1992 election, its one proposal for a big immediate rise in spending was to make a step increase in the basic state pension.

To show that the party was responsible in costing that, the late John Smith devised a shadow Budget that raised tax deductions to 60 per cent at a level of income the party thought made you rich. The good folk of Bessford, and many others round Britain, smelt a rat. If the rich were paying for one-off pension rise, who was going to pay for everything else? The leadership has learned its lesson. Avoid commitments on pensions.

The future of the basic state pension is not just a matter of tactics. It is touchstone to help define the gap between new Labour and its forebears. Has the party been modernised to take account of privatisation, or has it changed its spots?

If the state pays out cash in benefits, exactly how it is done scarcely matters to people in their role as taxpayers. In their role as potential recipients, it matters a lot. There is a deep difference between a welfare state that seeks to reduce poverty and a benefit system that seeks to relieve it. Since 1979, there has been huge increase in benefit costs. Within that, there has been a gradual shift away from universal poverty-reducing transfers (such as basic state pensions and unemployment pay) towards

means-tested poverty relief (such as housing benefit and income support).

The basic state pension has been central to this trend. From 1980, it has been indexed only to prices, rather than the higher of prices or average earnings. The costs of pensions has still risen about a quarter in real terms. More people are living longer. Many more women are earning a full entitlement through their contributions. Some real increases have been paid. And the pension had to be bumped up above general inflation when VAT was slapped on domestic fuel, a big item for pensioners.

Even so, the burden on taxpayers of paying the basic pension has fallen quite sharply. In 1979-80, it accounted for about 4.15 per cent of the national income. This year, it should take only 3.7 per cent. That would be a huge saving, if only this money and more had not been used for means-tested poverty relief. This downturn should accelerate under current rules, perhaps to 3 per cent of national income in 13 years time. In spite of scares about a demographic timebomb, the ratio of pensioners to earners should not rise much before 2010. Labour does not need to ask if it

can afford to raise pensions, but whether it wishes to switch money away from them. On a utilitarian value-for-money judgment, means-testing is always the best way to help those in need. A small rise in universal state pension only adds to the available resources of pensioners who do not draw means-tested benefits.

The real world is not utilitarian. An earned entitlement lifts you up. A means-tested benefit of the same amount leaves you poor. If Labour continued the switch from transfers to means-tested benefits, it

would add to poverty rather than reduce it. The value-for-money approach also wreaks havoc with incentives. A means-tested benefit, like a punitive tax rate, corrodes incentives to do anything but cheat. That is why means-testing, rather than "feather-bedding" breeds a welfare culture.

New Labour seems actually to have become the Utilitarian Party, but is not yet sure it wants to be. Its justice commission under Sir Gordon Borrie, duly scared by the ageing population threat, preferred targeted help to the poorest pensioners to restoring the link to earnings, which would be wasted on the affluent and would cost a packet if backdated to 1980. Gordon Brown opted to target help for 16 to 18-year old students, on the lines of university grants instead of child benefit, which is paid to millionaires who send their sons to Eton.

The party is still anxious to avoid the infected term "means-tested". So it suggested a minimum pension entitlement, aiming to bring in the estimated 700,000 pensioners who could claim income support but do not, while excluding those with private pensions. This sleight of hand should fool no-one. The critical long-term pension issue

is to persuade and help people on lower incomes to save for their own post-Serps private pensions. By definition, many cannot easily spare the cash, even if low-cost schemes can be set up for them. A means-tested "extra" state pension would destroy the incentive to save for a modest top-up that millions think they cannot afford.

For that reason, as much as internal political embarrassment, that idea seemed to have been dropped. Chris Smith, when shadow Social Security Secretary, formally dropped the old commitment to pensions indexed to earnings, but set an objective that "all pensioners share fairly in the increasing prosperity of the nation".

There is a simple way to ensure that, while avoiding any open-ended spending commitment to an ageing population. That is to fix total spending on the basic state pension as a proportion of national income, say the present 3.7 per cent. Pensioners are then automatically indexed to the nation's ability to pay. Until the second decade of the next century, the state pension would nearly be indexed to earnings. That would help today's and tomorrow's pensioners know where they stand but would not interfere with incentives to build private pensions, which should start building up by then.

Sadly, Mr Smith was replaced by Harriet Harman and the radical Utilitarian Party agenda has been resuscitated. That suits Labour's election tactics. Any post-election pensions commission would surely see through it.

Norwich Union's flotation typifies the changing face of insurance, says Marianne Curphey

A case of mutual pride surrendered

NORWICH UNION'S flotation plans bring to a close almost 200 years of being a mutual, and open another chapter in the changing face of the UK insurance industry.

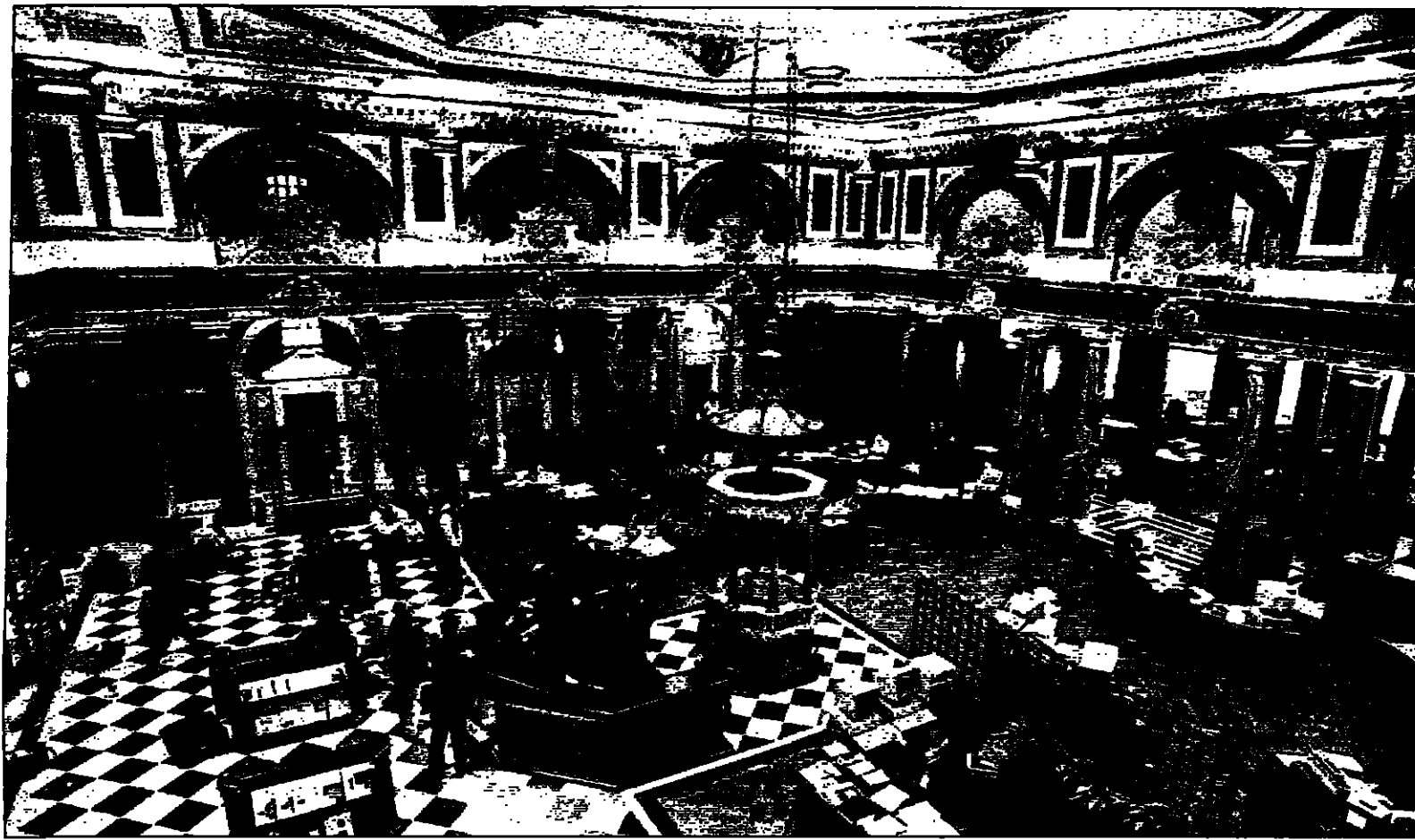
NU is the first mutual life insurer to announce its ambitions to go public, and other, smaller companies will be watching its progress.

Among them will be Friends Provident, which is still considering whether to ditch its mutual status and take the stock market plunge, remain as it is, or look for a powerful new parent. Scottish Amicable is another life mutual at a crossroads, although the City 'feeling' is that it is probably too small to float alone. Scottish Life and NPI have also been touted as candidates for demutualisation or takeover, and even the UK's biggest mutuals, including Standard Life, Scottish Widows and Equitable Life may have to consider demutualisation. At present, however, the latter three emphasise their commitment to mutualism.

The trigger for this wave of change within the industry is technology. Traditionally, the daily administration of insurance claims generated mountains of paperwork, handled by huge teams of backroom staff. The advent of sophisticated computer systems and on-screen claims handling has led companies to scale down staff numbers or even contract out the back office operation, a practice known euphemistically as "outsourcing".

There are also too many players chasing a finite amount of business. Over the last decade the industry has seen a rash of new entrants, mostly offering direct insurance over the telephone. Direct Line was one of the first of these young upstarts. It holds the number one position in the motor market and insures two million private motorists every year. But there are more than 50 other direct writers, some concentrating on niche markets, others trying to compete head-to-head with more established rivals.

In addition, the insurance industry is feeling the squeeze from the banks and building societies, which once relied on them to provide life and



The ornate Marble Hall at Norwich Union's Surrey House headquarters, after the completion in the spring of an extensive four-year refurbishment.

general insurance products. Having seen how large profit margins could be on insurance business, the banks and building societies are starting to set up their own operations, particularly on the life side.

Abbey National and the Halifax Building Society have both set their sights on becoming financial services powerhouses. The Halifax, which is due to float next year, is in the process of developing its life insurance division through the acquisition of the Clerical Medical, the life mutual.

In response, insurance companies have started to move into the banks' traditional territory. Norwich Union's closest rivals have already taken steps to ensure that money from maturing life insurance policies stays with them instead of ending up in building society coffers.

Prudential, the biggest name in UK pensions, opened

a new deposit-taking service two days ago. Standard Life is only weeks away from opening its own bank and Scottish Widows has had a deposit service since May 1995.

Once it has successfully floated, NU will probably have to start its own bank at a cost of £20 million or so to keep up with developments in the industry. It says flotation will give it the freedom to invest more adventurously and so make greater returns to policyholders.

But observers see the move as defensive. They say NU has made the decision to become a quoted company after being assailed by its larger, publicly quoted rivals and forced to witness banks and building societies encroaching on its traditional business sectors.

Raising money from shareholders will give it the cash it needs to expand, either organically or through acquisition.

in what is fast becoming a fiercely competitive market.

Earlier this year NU's composite rivals, Royal Insurance and Sun Alliance, acknowledged that to survive in such a market their businesses needed to be streamlined and competitive. Their merger, and the creation of a new company, Royal & Sun Alliance, is expected to result in the loss of 5,000 jobs. But it will create the largest insurance company in the UK, with a 16 per cent market share. Its board expects to save £175 million by 1998 through staff cuts and cost reductions.

Similarly, Refuge Assurance and United Friendly believe that their proposed merger will bring cost savings and a bigger customer base from which to expand. So what can investors and policyholders expect in this brave new world? Most analysts agree that the current wave of

consolidation is set to continue.

The Halifax will probably be looking to make further acquisitions after its flotation. Commercial Union, one of the stronger of the composites, is

believed to have its eye on Guardian Royal Exchange, its weaker rival. NatWest Bank is rumoured to be stalking Legal & General, although the latter could just as easily merge with a fellow composite or buy up

smaller fry. Provident Mutual has already been taken over by General Accident, while five companies, including NatWest, bid for Clerical Medical, which means that there are four major players with spare cash looking for a life company to buy.

Some observers have predicted that in five years there will be a handful of only major players offering a one-stop financial shop to individual investors. These mighty institutions will be able to arrange a mortgage, issue a cheque book, sort out your life insurance, take your money on deposit and provide customers motor, household and travel insurance.

The Halifax, Abbey National and Prudential have already taken steps to ensure they are ahead of the game. The Prudential has stated that it would like to buy a building society or life mutual to bolster its existing portfolio of life insurance. NU has a long way to go before it can compete on these terms. The City regards the performance of its general insurance business as mediocre and its management have still to adjust to the discipline of running a quoted company, rather than a provincial mutual.

Next year is NU's bicentenary. It will probably make it to market without being swallowed by a large predator. However, in common with many fellow mutual life insurers, there is no guarantee it will enjoy another 200 years of independence.

FINANCIAL NEWS FROM BANK OF SCOTLAND

Bank of Scotland Interim Results

	6 months ended 31 August 1996 (unaudited)	6 months ended 31 August 1995 (unaudited)	Year ended 29 February 1996
TOTAL PROFIT FROM GROUP OPERATIONS BEFORE PROVISIONS	£408.2m	£339.6m	£706.4m
PROFIT BEFORE TAXATION	£324.3m	£261.6m	£545.0m
TOTAL CAPITAL RESOURCES	£3,688m	£3,105m	£3,533m
TOTAL ASSETS	£46,140m	£36,837m	£44,099m
EARNINGS PER ORDINARY STOCK UNIT	15.0p	12.6p	25.8p
DIVIDEND PER ORDINARY STOCK UNIT	2.91p	2.45p	6.85p

Pre-tax profit £324.3 million - up 24 per cent

Pre-tax return on average equity (annualised) 36.7 per cent

Dividend increased by 18.8 per cent

Cost-income ratio 52.9 per cent

BANK OF SCOTLAND
A FRIEND FOR LIFE

For a copy of the Bank's annual report please contact: Public Relations Department, Bank of Scotland, The Mound, Edinburgh EH1 1YD.

Telephone marathon in search of British Gas service

From Ms Elaine Elliott. Sir, I was unfortunate to inherit a British Gas service contract on moving house earlier this year. My misfortune was compounded on suffering a complete breakdown of my central heating system last weekend, requiring British Gas's service.

It was not necessary merely to make two or three attempts to telephone in order to get through (Pennington, September 24), more like between 20 to 50 calls. Each time I attempted to contact British Gas (which was more often

than should have been necessary for the reasons given below) it took me approximately 11-12 hours to get through! Like Mr Fortin (Letter, September 29), I tried a variety of numbers with no greater success on any.

However, an appointment was made for Friday afternoon and accordingly I took time off work. Nobody turned up, nor was I contacted by British Gas. On telephoning I was told eventually (at 7pm) that the allocated engineer was "off sick". A further appointment was made for the

following morning. Nobody turned up, thus another phone call was required. I was assured that someone would be with me by 6pm. Nobody turned up. I phoned again. A further appointment was made for the following morning.

Much to my amazement an engineer arrived. He even had the right spare part and rectified the problem within a short period. Yours faithfully, ELAINE ELLIOTT, 164 Felstead Road, Orpington, Kent.

Give credit where credit is due

From Mr Erik Peckett. Sir, Having read the report on the problems regarding British Gas servicing (September 24), it was with some trepidation that I telephoned the service contract number this morning at about 10 am. The call was answered on my second attempt and a cheerful voice, having checked my details, announced that if I could be in this afternoon an engineer would call. At 12.02pm, the engineer arrived and by 12.41pm he had left, having replaced the pump on the system. Credit where credit is due.

Yours faithfully, ERIK PECKETT, The Haven, Gabwell Lane, Stokeinteignhead, Newton Abbot, Devon.

The Saturday factor

From Mr K. Francombe. Sir, Mr Hooper of Town and Country Lighting is mistaken in thinking the number of Saturdays in a calendar month might affect the retail sales figures produced by the Office for National Statistics ("Saturday factor in sales figures", September 24).

The retail sales index is in fact an indicator of the average sales per week within standard four or five-week trading periods as opposed to calendar months. The trading peri-

ods for August in both 1995 and 1996 included four Saturdays so that the level of sales in August 1996 was not influenced by an increased number of Saturdays in the calendar month.

Yours faithfully, KEITH FRANCOMBE, Director of Distribution and Services Sector Division, Office for National Statistics, Cardiff Road, Newport, South Wales.

Call to the top for prompt efficient service also draws a non-response

From Mr D. Watkiss. Sir, We are waiting for a part of our boiler which packed up almost three weeks ago, but due to the unavailability of our local three-star service ("We undertake to provide you with

priority attention and prompt efficient service" - from their latest mailshot) we have no idea when.

Having failed to reach anyone by phone for the past five days, I was given the number of Mr Bob Fraser - Director

of Operations (01784 874000) - which I have just dialled. The result: no reply.

Yours faithfully, DAVID WATKISS, 41 Queens Gardens, Ealing, W5.

Multiplex expansion by Virgin

Virgin Cinemas has stepped up its expansion programme by announcing plans for three giant cinemas. The Virgin Cinemas Megaplex, a 20-screen complex seating about 5,000, will open in Leeds in early 1998. It will be followed by a 15-screen cinema in Bolton and an 11-screen complex in South Shields.

Virgin has disclosed plans for six new multiplexes in the next 18 months, and the company is hoping to build a total of 20 new multiplexes in the next three years. Richard Branson, chairman of Virgin, said: "These new sites, designed by us from scratch, will allow us to offer an experience which is unique in the UK cinema industry. In short, they will offer a great night out."

Lloyd's issues ultimatum

Lloyd's of London has written to nearly 700 UK names, giving them a week in which to settle their debts or face legal proceedings. Dibley Lupton Alsop, the law firm acting for Lloyd's, despatched the letters on Tuesday evening.

The initial mailing excludes 655 non-paying names in America, where pursuit of debt is complicated by differing state legislation. It also excludes 253 names in Canada, who have been given more time to consider their position.

NCM swoops

NCM Group, the international credit insurer based in Amsterdam, will snap up the remaining 75 per cent stake in the leading Dutch credit insurer, EKR Kredietverzekering, from the Danish government.

The move to privatise EKR started in April 1995, when NCM - parent of NCM Credit Insurance, the UK's largest private export credit insurer - took a 25 per cent stake.

Benetton

Benetton's pre-tax profits for the first half of 1996 were £92 million compared with £78 million last year.

TNT falls to A\$2bn bid by Dutch telecom firm

FROM RACHEL BRIDGE IN SYDNEY

TNT, the transport and distribution giant, became the latest Australian company to fall into foreign hands yesterday when the Dutch telecom group KPN launched a A\$2 billion agreed takeover bid for the group.

The bid is in line with the group's ambitious expansion drive. KPN, which has made no secret of its desire to become a global player, is offering A\$2.45 in cash for every TNT share, representing a 48 per cent premium to TNT's pre-bid share price.

The acquisition will turn KPN into one of the four largest time-sensitive distribution companies in the world, with operations in 47 countries, as well as the biggest time-sensitive distribution company in Europe.

Wim Dik, chairman and chief executive of KPN, explained yesterday: "For KPN this acquisition represents a significant step in our strategy to pursue growth and international expansion of our core businesses."

He said that a key reason for the deal was to enable KPN to reap the benefits from combining TNT's operations with those of KPN's postal and logistics subsidiary, PTT Post, and GD Express Worldwide, a joint venture distribution operation in which both TNT and KPN have had an interest since 1992.

David Mortimer, TNT's managing director and chief executive, said: "This proposal represents an outstanding opportunity to create a strong global transportation group. KPN is a logical partner for our businesses and this is a winning proposal for both TNT and KPN."

News of the bid was warmly welcomed by analysts in Australia, who have seen TNT's share price languish around the A\$2 mark for several months in the wake of a disappointing profit performance from the group.

In the year to June 30, TNT's underlying operating profits fell from A\$60.1 million to A\$25.8 million after its operations in Australia and Asia and the Americas plunged into the red.

One analyst said: "It's a sensational deal. Shareholders won't be able to get out quick enough. KPN are certainly not penny-pinching."

Another added: "The last time TNT's shares got to anything like \$2.45 seems like about two centuries ago. It's a very good price."

TNT's shares jumped 79 cents, to end the day at \$2.42, as KPN announced that it had bought 9.9 per cent of TNT's shares in the market. KPN, which pushed up its operating income by 11.1 per cent, to A\$2.9 billion in the year to December 31, said that it expects the acquisition of TNT to be earnings positive in 1997. The takeover is subject to approval by the European Union and Australia's Foreign Investment Review Board.



Alexander Baron von Spoercken, Clubhaus chairman, has gone for expansion

Lamont may be 'forced' to close Shaw Carpets

FROM EILEEN MCCABE IN DUBLIN

LAMONT HOLDINGS, the Belfast textile company, said it may jettison Shaw Carpets after the Barnsley company incurred a £1.8 million loss for the first six months of this year.

Paul Vaught, Lamont chairman, said that despite a restructuring at Shaw in 1994 that saw the workforce reduced to 200 from 350, losses had continued. Talks had already begun with Shaw's workforce but "if no other solution can be identified Lamont will be forced to close the business", he said.

Overall, Lamont reported

interim pre-tax profits of £2.1 million, down from £7.8 million for the same period last year. The 1995 figure included £4.6 million from a property deal. Operating profits, excluding Shaw Carpets, were £4.8 million, the same as in the first half of 1995.

Earnings per share fell to 4.68p, from 17.96p, but the company maintained the interim dividend payment at last year's level of 3.65p, payable on December 2.

Lamont said that it was more hopeful about the future of Moygashel, its linen com-

pany, which it expected to return to profit early in 1997.

The company's other operations, Alexander DREW in Rochdale, Bonded Fibre Fabric in Bristol and Northern Ireland Carpets in Newtownards had all performed satisfactorily.

Mr Vaught said he did not expect trading conditions to improve in the short term. After the resolution of the Shaw Carpet situation and improvements in Moygashel the group would be able to move forward in 1997 on a much sounder basis, he said.

Strong drive by Clubhaus lifts results

BY FRASER NELSON

EUROPEAN expansion helped Clubhaus, the golf course operator that split from Ex-Lands Group, return stronger-than-expected results in its first six months as an independent company.

In the half-year to June 30, pre-tax profits rose to £728,000, on sales of £3.14 million. While no comparative figures were given, this stood against 1995 full-year profits of £875,000 and sales of £920,000.

Earnings were 2.15p per share, but there was no dividend.

The shares gained 7p yesterday to close at 74½p.

Brent Walker chief 'paid £1.2m to create false profits'

BY JON ASHWORTH

A SENIOR Brent Walker executive was paid a £500,000 "reward" for orchestrating a "massive cover-up" of millions of pounds of false profits at the leisure and entertainment group, a court heard yesterday. Auditors, solicitors and investigators were repeatedly lied to, and fictitious documents created, to back up the falsehoods, it was claimed.

Money was also laundered through "a very convoluted" and "tortuous" route involving America and the Bahamas. Southwark Crown Court was told. The exercise even included appointing a dead man to head a company, said Peter Rook, QC, prosecuting.

The allegations were made at the opening of the trial of Donald Anderson, a former finance director of Goldcrest, Brent Walker's film and television division. Anderson, 43, of Richmond, Surrey, was described as the "architect" of the cover-up, and one with his "fingerprints" all over the concealment operation. He denies one count of attempting to pervert the course of justice between August 1, 1988, and October 23, 1990.

Mr Rook said that £19 million worth of "false profit-taking" featured in Brent Walker's film and television division between 1984 and 1987. It involved inventing sales of film rights, which were effectively funded by the company in such a way that "money was going round in circles". The result was a bogus gloss on the company's financial health.

The jury was reminded of Brent Walker's spectacular growth during the 1980s under the "driving force" of George Walker, the chairman and chief executive.

However, in August 1988, a newspaper report questioned the "bona fides" of two of the false deals. Clearly, said Mr Rook, it would have been "catastrophic" had the truth come out about the earlier non-existent sales. Hence the massive cover-up "in order to put investigators off the scent", he said.

In August 1991, a new Brent

Walker board called in the Serious Fraud Office to investigate "certain apparently unrelated matters". Mr Rook told the court: "It is the prosecution case that Mr Anderson left this country in the middle of 1992 because he thought the SFO were coming close to uncovering his dishonest activities." He "voluntarily" returned to Britain in November last year.

Mr Rook said a trial relating to Brent Walker took place in 1994, but he warned the jury not to speculate "as to who was the defendant, or what the charges were, or what the verdict was".

The trial continues today.

Lavendon debut set at £29.8m

BY OUR CITY STAFF

LAVENDON, the UK's largest hydraulic-powered lifts operator, will be valued at £29.8 million when it makes its Stock Exchange debut next Thursday.

The company, formed in 1992 through a buy-in of Nationwide Access, is raising £11.3 million from the flotation, which priced the shares at 140p. It will use the cash for overseas expansion. A branch was opened in Germany in July and another is being set up in Dubai.

David Price, chairman, who invested £300,000 four years ago will have a 21 per cent stake worth £6.26 million.

In 1995, the company made profits of £1.8 million on sales of £9.88 million. It is expected to produce profits of £2.55 million by the end of 1996, leaving earnings of 12.84p. This puts its shares on a ratio of 13.25, slightly below the sector average.

ACCOUNTANCY

Duty-bound to keep up to date

Professionals must have a regime of mandatory post-qualifying education, says Robert Smith



Smith: public is entitled to evidence of continuing education

all British-trained chartered accountants operate outside practice. We believe that the public can reasonably expect that our members who, for example, are responsible for the preparation or presentation of financial reports in public interest entities such as listed companies, building societies and charities will also maintain and develop their knowledge and skills throughout

their professional life, and that any regime requiring their colleagues in practice to undertake continuing professional education should also apply to them.

No such regime will win the support of the public or of the profession unless it is seen to be relevant to individual needs and occupations. Clearly, the needs of the practising accountant will differ from those

members outside practice who are covered by the scheme. We also recognise that many of our members operate in areas so divorced from the core skills of accountancy that any requirement for continuing professional learning in this area would be irrelevant.

Any such scheme should also recognise that the process is one that involves the professional in a process of continuous professional learning, which he himself prescribes and drives within the scheme, rather than the more passive process of continuing professional education, driven by the teacher in a classroom environment.

Thus, we acknowledge the value of what may be called unstructured learning, where the professional chooses and reads publications relevant to his specialist area. Alongside this will sit the requirement for structured learning at courses, seminars and conferences.

What we propose reflects a level of continuing professional learning which the vast majority of our members (and members of other accountancy bodies) will already be achieving. The mandatory nature of the proposed regime is designed to demonstrate to the public that their expectations are being met by a systematic, monitored process, which is flexible enough to allow responsible professionals to focus on specialist areas.

Robert Smith is president of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland and chief executive of Morgan Grenfell Development Capital.

Risks and rewards of squaring the circle

Making financial reporting clearer and easier to understand is good for you. Or at least it is good for the accountancy firms. Possibly both. And we have the Accounting Standards Board to thank for this.

Take two of the latest surveys. The first, from KPMG, deals with companies' preliminary results. The second, from Arthur Andersen, deals with the narrative reporting in an annual report. The gist of what KPMG is saying is that companies really should have noticed what you can do with technology these days. There is no reason for preliminary profit reports ahead of the publication of the annual reports and accounts. That system dates from the days when the company had the audited figures and wanted to release them to shareholders and the investment community while in the background a printing works wheezed for days over the production of the official document. Now that it is perfectly possible to produce the full report and accounts in the same time it takes to produce the preliminary figures, why not scrap the preliminaries?

The hidden message from the auditors is that preliminary results announcements, which are unaudited but are expected to resemble the truth are growing increasingly lengthy and economical with the financial facts. Or as one leading auditor put it to me this week: "I have often sat in at a client's announcement of preliminary figures and found myself increasingly wondering if they are talking about the same figures that we have audited."

So we should by all means use the excuse of faster technology to get rid of what has become a rather inaccurate system of telling the world about a company's forthcoming results. The process would move companies even closer to explaining themselves properly and clearly to their shareholders. The same is true of the messages from the Andersen survey. "If there is one thing that is guaranteed in the nanosecond Nineties, it is that there will be continual changes in corporate reporting." The biggest change in terms of the quality of financial information has been the introduction of the concept of the operating and financial review.

The ASB put it forward as a statement of best practice in July 1993 and craftily said it should be persuasive rather than mandatory. As a result, finance directors could not respond with a knee-jerk "this is yet another rule too far" argument. Instead, they had to look at what happens under the American financial reporting system where such reports have

been commonplace for years. It worked. Of the sample of reports in the Andersen survey 46 per cent either produced a formal operating and financial review or something very close to it. It tended to be the smaller companies in the survey that did not.

But the Andersen survey shows clearly where the use of such a report is not fulfilling the ASB's original hopes and intentions. It called for a discussion of "trends and factors underlying the business that have affected the results but are not expected to continue in the future, and known events, trends and uncertainties that are expected to have an impact on the business in the future".

In terms of trends identified and discussed, the survey found that fewer than 15 per cent did so and in terms of future uncertainty fewer than 20 per cent did so.

This is perhaps understandable for two reasons. First, auditors are very bad at committing themselves when it comes to auditing and quantifying what may be future risks. The liability and litigation threat almost guarantees that stance. Companies themselves are traditionally terrified of quantifying any future risks or making any forecasts. In their case it is not the threat of litigation that holds them back. They simply prefer not to let shareholders or investors have any figures that could act as a measurement of success. So both companies and accountancy firms are risk averse. Or at least they are when it comes to published and auditable information.

The great paradox is that the greatest growth in corporate services in recent years has been in the field of risk management. Accountancy firms may be doing less audit work for clients.

But what they are doing is risk management evaluation. And by that they do not mean simply projects such as assessing how effective the internal audit function is, or whether the financial reporting system is secure. Almost any business function now comes under risk management. All business is based on risk. So all aspects of business can be analysed for risk management purposes. And it is the accountancy firms that are doing it. A customer satisfaction programme is risk. Efficient use of transport is risk. Workplace accidents are risk. So the accountants advise. It has become, almost by stealth, the biggest growth area in advisory services.

And now if the trends in financial reporting continue, the circle can be squared. Not only will accountants advise you on risks, but they will also insist that it shows up in a company's financial reporting as well.



ROBERT BRUCE

Under the cover of darkness

MUCH of the current debate within the professional bodies which oversee accounting is about whether or when the Auditing Practices Board should gain its independence and shift its offices out of the English Institute of Chartered Accountants' headquarters at Moorgate Place in the City of London. But the debate has hidden a significant move. The profession's joint disciplinary scheme has got their first. As if under cover of

darkness, it has moved to offices near Liverpool Street station. Not before time. In the words of an evasive Auditing Practices Board person "it used to have its office in the corridor just down from the president's bedroom".

Black and white

PROPOSED new tax rules on employee travel have received the thumbs down. Not only has the English Institute of

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Chartered Accountants' tax faculty told the Inland Revenue that they are around 100 years out of date, but the Chartered Institute of Taxation has produced examples of a commuting nightmare. In future, calculations will be required to show the savings created, or not, when an employee drops a child off at school on the journey into work. Time to go back to the drawing board on this one, it would appear, if not the blackboard.

Dedicated

IT IS true. Accountants prefer their offices to their homes. The latest Hays Accountancy Personnel survey shows that 54 per cent of accountants thought that being given a cake in the office on their birthday was a good thing. However, only 34 per cent of accountants thought it would be a good thing to be given the day off on their birthday.

Accounting error

THE latest accounts of the Chartered Accountants Compensation Scheme reveal an interesting disparity. The scheme exists to compensate victims of dastardly accountants who have made off with clients' money. It cost £121,991 in annual premiums to insure the scheme, but payouts for the year came to only £46,383. Someone is winning here. But it doesn't seem to be accountants or their wronged clients.

ROBERT BRUCE

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THE TIMES UNIT TRUST INFORMATION SERVICE

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Strong gains in equities and gilts

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

1996	Low	Company	Price	%	P/E
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES					
121	121	Adnams	121.00	0.0	12.1
122	122	Beck's	122.00	0.0	12.2
123	123	Brewery	123.00	0.0	12.3
124	124	Carlsberg	124.00	0.0	12.4
125	125	Heineken	125.00	0.0	12.5
126	126	Kaiser	126.00	0.0	12.6
127	127	Miller	127.00	0.0	12.7
128	128	Stout	128.00	0.0	12.8
129	129	Tennent	129.00	0.0	12.9
130	130	Watney	130.00	0.0	13.0
BANKS					
131	131	Barclays	131.00	0.0	13.1
132	132	Bank of Scotland	132.00	0.0	13.2
133	133	Bank of Ireland	133.00	0.0	13.3
134	134	Bank of London	134.00	0.0	13.4
135	135	Bank of Montreal	135.00	0.0	13.5
136	136	Bank of New York	136.00	0.0	13.6
137	137	Bank of Paris	137.00	0.0	13.7
138	138	Bank of Spain	138.00	0.0	13.8
139	139	Bank of Tokyo	139.00	0.0	13.9
140	140	Bank of Wales	140.00	0.0	14.0
BREWERIES, PUBS & REST					
141	141	Adnams	141.00	0.0	14.1
142	142	Beck's	142.00	0.0	14.2
143	143	Brewery	143.00	0.0	14.3
144	144	Carlsberg	144.00	0.0	14.4
145	145	Heineken	145.00	0.0	14.5
146	146	Kaiser	146.00	0.0	14.6
147	147	Miller	147.00	0.0	14.7
148	148	Stout	148.00	0.0	14.8
149	149	Tennent	149.00	0.0	14.9
150	150	Watney	150.00	0.0	15.0
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
151	151	Adnams	151.00	0.0	15.1
152	152	Beck's	152.00	0.0	15.2
153	153	Brewery	153.00	0.0	15.3
154	154	Carlsberg	154.00	0.0	15.4
155	155	Heineken	155.00	0.0	15.5
156	156	Kaiser	156.00	0.0	15.6
157	157	Miller	157.00	0.0	15.7
158	158	Stout	158.00	0.0	15.8
159	159	Tennent	159.00	0.0	15.9
160	160	Watney	160.00	0.0	16.0
ENGINEERING, VEHICLES					
161	161	Adnams	161.00	0.0	16.1
162	162	Beck's	162.00	0.0	16.2
163	163	Brewery	163.00	0.0	16.3
164	164	Carlsberg	164.00	0.0	16.4
165	165	Heineken	165.00	0.0	16.5
166	166	Kaiser	166.00	0.0	16.6
167	167	Miller	167.00	0.0	16.7
168	168	Stout	168.00	0.0	16.8
169	169	Tennent	169.00	0.0	16.9
170	170	Watney	170.00	0.0	17.0
FOOD MANUFACTURERS					
171	171	Adnams	171.00	0.0	17.1
172	172	Beck's	172.00	0.0	17.2
173	173	Brewery	173.00	0.0	17.3
174	174	Carlsberg	174.00	0.0	17.4
175	175	Heineken	175.00	0.0	17.5
176	176	Kaiser	176.00	0.0	17.6
177	177	Miller	177.00	0.0	17.7
178	178	Stout	178.00	0.0	17.8
179	179	Tennent	179.00	0.0	17.9
180	180	Watney	180.00	0.0	18.0
HEALTHCARE					
181	181	Adnams	181.00	0.0	18.1
182	182	Beck's	182.00	0.0	18.2
183	183	Brewery	183.00	0.0	18.3
184	184	Carlsberg	184.00	0.0	18.4
185	185	Heineken	185.00	0.0	18.5
186	186	Kaiser	186.00	0.0	18.6
187	187	Miller	187.00	0.0	18.7
188	188	Stout	188.00	0.0	18.8
189	189	Tennent	189.00	0.0	18.9
190	190	Watney	190.00	0.0	19.0
HOUSEHOLD GOODS					
191	191	Adnams	191.00	0.0	19.1
192	192	Beck's	192.00	0.0	19.2
193	193	Brewery	193.00	0.0	19.3
194	194	Carlsberg	194.00	0.0	19.4
195	195	Heineken	195.00	0.0	19.5
196	196	Kaiser	196.00	0.0	19.6
197	197	Miller	197.00	0.0	19.7
198	198	Stout	198.00	0.0	19.8
199	199	Tennent	199.00	0.0	19.9
200	200	Watney	200.00	0.0	20.0
INSURANCE					
201	201	Adnams	201.00	0.0	20.1
202	202	Beck's	202.00	0.0	20.2
203	203	Brewery	203.00	0.0	20.3
204	204	Carlsberg	204.00	0.0	20.4
205	205	Heineken	205.00	0.0	20.5
206	206	Kaiser	206.00	0.0	20.6
207	207	Miller	207.00	0.0	20.7
208	208	Stout	208.00	0.0	20.8
209	209	Tennent	209.00	0.0	20.9
210	210	Watney	210.00	0.0	21.0
INVESTMENT TRUSTS					
211	211	Adnams	211.00	0.0	21.1
212	212	Beck's	212.00	0.0	21.2
213	213	Brewery	213.00	0.0	21.3
214	214	Carlsberg	214.00	0.0	21.4
215	215	Heineken	215.00	0.0	21.5
216	216	Kaiser	216.00	0.0	21.6
217	217	Miller	217.00	0.0	21.7
218	218	Stout	218.00	0.0	21.8
219	219	Tennent	219.00	0.0	21.9
220	220	Watney	220.00	0.0	22.0
DISTRIBUTORS					
221	221	Adnams	221.00	0.0	22.1
222	222	Beck's	222.00	0.0	22.2
223	223	Brewery	223.00	0.0	22.3
224	224	Carlsberg	224.00	0.0	22.4
225	225	Heineken	225.00	0.0	22.5
226	226	Kaiser	226.00	0.0	22.6
227	227	Miller	227.00	0.0	22.7
228	228	Stout	228.00	0.0	22.8
229	229	Tennent	229.00	0.0	22.9
230	230	Watney	230.00	0.0	23.0

BREWERIES, PUBS & REST					DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS						
1996	Low	Company	Price	%	P/E	1996	Low	Company	Price	%	P/E
231	231	Adnams	231.00	0.0	23.1	241	241	Adnams	241.00	0.0	24.1
232	232	Beck's	232.00	0.0	23.2	242	242	Beck's	242.00	0.0	24.2
233	233	Brewery	233.00	0.0	23.3	243	243	Brewery	243.00	0.0	24.3
234	234	Carlsberg	234.00	0.0	23.4	244	244	Carlsberg	244.00	0.0	24.4
235	235	Heineken	235.00	0.0	23.5	245	245	Heineken	245.00	0.0	24.5
236	236	Kaiser	236.00	0.0	23.6	246	246	Kaiser	246.00	0.0	24.6
237	237	Miller	237.00	0.0	23.7	247	247	Miller	247.00	0.0	24.7
238	238	Stout	238.00	0.0	23.8	248	248	Stout	248.00	0.0	24.8
239	239	Tennent	239.00	0.0	23.9	249	249	Tennent	249.00	0.0	24.9
240	240	Watney	240.00	0.0	24.0	250	250	Watney	250.00	0.0	25.0
ENGINEERING, VEHICLES											
251	251	Adnams	251.00	0.0	25.1	261	261	Adnams	261.00	0.0	26.1
252	252	Beck's	252.00	0.0	25.2	262	262	Beck's	262.00	0.0	26.2
253	253	Brewery	253.00	0.0	25.3	263	263	Brewery	263.00	0.0	26.3
254	254	Carlsberg	254.00	0.0	25.4	264	264	Carlsberg	264.00	0.0	26.4
255	255	Heineken	255.00	0.0	25.5	265	265	Heineken	265.00	0.0	26.5
256	256	Kaiser	256.00	0.0	25.6	266	266	Kaiser	266.00	0.0	26.6
257	257	Miller	257.00	0.0	25.7	267	267	Miller	267.00	0.0	26.7
258	258	Stout	258.00	0.0	25.8	268	268	Stout	268.00	0.0	26.8
259	259	Tennent	259.00	0.0	25.9	269	269	Tennent	269.00	0.0	26.9
260	260	Watney	260.00	0.0	26.0	270	270	Watney	270.00	0.0	27.0
FOOD MANUFACTURERS											
271	271	Adnams	271.00	0.0	27.1	281	281	Adnams	281.00	0.0	28.1
272	272	Beck's	272.00	0.0	27.2	282	282	Beck's	282.00	0.0	28.2
273	273	Brewery	273.00	0.0	27.3	283	283	Brewery	283.00	0.0	28.3
274	274	Carlsberg	274.00	0.0	27.4	284	284	Carlsberg	284.00	0.0	28.4
275	275	Heineken	275.00	0.0	27.5	285	285	Heineken	285.00	0.0	28.5
276	276	Kaiser	276.00	0.0	27.6	286	286	Kaiser	286.00	0.0	28.6
277	277	Miller	277.00	0.0	27.7	287	287	Miller	287.00	0.0	28.7
278	278	Stout	278.00	0.0	27.8	288	288	Stout	288.00	0.0	28.8
279	279	Tennent	279.00	0.0	27.9	289	289	Tennent	289.00	0.0	28.9
280	280	Watney	280.00	0.0	28.0	290	290	Watney	290.00	0.0	29.0
HOUSEHOLD GOODS											
291	291	Adnams	291.00	0.0	29.1	301	301	Adnams	301.00	0.0	30.1
292	292	Beck's	292.00	0.0	29.2	302	302	Beck's	302.00	0.0	30.2
293	293	Brewery	293.00	0.0	29.3	303	303	Brewery	303.00	0.0	30.3
294	294	Carlsberg	294.00	0.0	29.4	304	304	Carlsberg	304.00	0.0	30.4
295	295	Heineken	295.00	0.0	29.5	305	305	Heineken	305.00	0.0	30.5
296	296	Kaiser	296.00	0.0	29.6	306	306	Kaiser	306.00	0.0	30.6
297	297	Miller	297.00	0.0	29.7	307	307	Miller	307.00	0.0	30.7
298	298	Stout	298.00	0.0	29.8	308	308	Stout	308.00	0.0	30.8
299	299	Tennent	299.00	0.0	29.9	309	309	Tennent	309.00	0.0	30.9
300	300	Watney	300.00	0.0	30.0	310	310	Watney	310.00	0.0	31.0
INVESTMENT TRUSTS											
311	311	Adnams	311.00	0.0	31.1	321	321	Adnams	321.00	0.0	32.1
312	312	Beck's	312.00	0.0	31.2	322	322	Beck's	322.00	0.0	32.2
313	313	Brewery	313.00	0.0	31.3	323	323	Brewery	323.00	0.0	32.3
314	314	Carlsberg	314.00	0.0	31.4	324	324	Carlsberg	324.00	0.0	32.4
315	315	Heineken	315.00	0.0	31.5	325	325	Heineken	325.00	0.0	32.5
316	316	Kaiser	316.00	0.0	31.6	326	326	Kaiser	326.00	0.0	32.6
317	317	Miller	317.00	0.0	31.7	327	327	Miller	327.00	0.0	32.7
318	318	Stout	318.00	0.0	31.8	328	328	Stout	328.00	0.0	32.8
319	319	Tennent	319.00	0.0	31.9	329	329	Tennent	329.00	0.0	32.9
320	320	Watney	320.00	0.0	32.0	330	330	Watney	330.00	0.0	33.0

Hotel liable for speaker's racial offence

Burton and Another v De Vere Hotels
Before Mr Justice Smith, Mrs R. Chapman and Lord Gwynn of Clee

[Judgment September 18]

An employer subjected employees to racial harassment when he allowed a third party to abuse them racially in circumstances over which he had control and where he could have prevented the harassment or reduced the extent of it.

The Employment Appeal Tribunal held in allowing an appeal by two employees, Freda Burton and Sonia Rhule, against the decision of a Nottingham Industrial Tribunal on November 14, 1995 that their employer, De Vere Hotels, had not discriminated against them contrary to section 4 of the Race Relations Act 1976. The case was remitted to the industrial tribunal for the assessment of compensation.

Section 4 of the 1976 Act provides: "(2) It is unlawful for a person, in the case of a person employed by him ... to discriminate against that person ... (a) by subjecting him to ... detriment."

Mrs Laura Cox, QC, and Ms Karen Monaghan for the employees; Mr Alan Wilkie, QC, for the employers.

MRS JUSTICE SMITH said that the appeal was concerned with the extent of the duty of an employer to protect his employees from acts of racial abuse or harassment in the course of work, where the abuse or harassment came from a third party, not a fellow employee.

The appellants, two young Afro-

Caribbean women, were employed as casual waitresses at the Penline Hotel, Derby. One evening, about 400 men, members and guests of the City of Derby Round Table, attended a dinner at the hotel at which event the speaker was Bernard Manning.

The appellants heard Mr Manning make jokes about the sexual organs and sexual abilities of black men. He made racially offensive remarks to them and created an atmosphere which probably encouraged some guests further to abuse them.

The appellants brought complaints against their employers under the 1976 Act. The industrial tribunal found that although they had suffered the detriment of racial harassment, they had been subjected to it by Mr Manning and the guests and not by the employers.

The employers had not subjected them to the detriment, first because they had neither knowingly stood by while they were abused and harassed nor had they foreseen that Mr Manning would behave as he did.

Second, the tribunal so found because although the hotel managers ought to have given instructions to their staff to protect the employees from the predictably offensive content of Mr Manning's speech, his failure to do so was not "less favourable treatment on racial grounds".

In the appeal tribunal's view, the tribunal below had imposed upon the employees a burden additional to that imposed by the Act, namely the burden of showing that the employers subjected them to the detriment of harassment on racial grounds.

In effect, it had required the employees to show that the employers were themselves affected by racial bias or animus. It was not necessary for the employee to show that the discriminator had any intention or motive to discriminate. Accordingly, the tribunal's decision could not stand.

The problem was to decide what an applicant had to prove in order to show that the employer subjected the employee to the detriment of racial abuse or harassment, where the actual abuser or harasser was a third party and not a servant or agent of the employer for whose actions the employer would be vicariously liable. Put another way, the problem was to decide the extent of the duty of an employer to protect the employee from racial harassment from third parties.

The appeal tribunal accepted that, in practice, where an employer was shown to have actual knowledge that racial harassment of an employee was taking place, or deliberately or recklessly closed his eyes to the fact that it was taking place, if he did not act reasonably to prevent it, he would be liable to the detriment of racial harassment.

However, foresight and culpability were not the means by which the employer's duty was to be defined. The duty was not to subject the employee to racial harassment. The statutory test was best understood by consideration of the true meaning of the word "subjecting".

"Subjecting" was not a word which connoted action or decision. Rather it connoted "control". A person subjected another to some-

thing if he caused or allowed that thing to happen in circumstances where he could control whether it happened or not. An employer subjected an employee to the detriment of racial harassment if he caused or permitted the racial harassment to occur in circumstances in which he could control whether it happened or not.

It was not necessary or appropriate that any particular degree of foresight on the part of the employer needed to be established. Indeed it was undesirable that concepts of the law of negligence should be imported into the statutory torts of racial and sexual discrimination.

However, on occasions when the employer knew or foresaw might be relevant to what control the employer could exercise. Lack of possible foresight and the unexpected nature of an event might be relevant to the question of whether the event was under the employer's control.

But foresight of the events or the lack of it could not be determinative of whether the events were under the employer's control. An employer might foresee that racial harassment was a real possibility and yet be able to do very little if anything to prevent it from happening or protect his employees from it.

For example, the employer of a bus or train conductor might recognise that the employee would face a real risk of racial harassment at times. Yet the prevention of such an event would be largely beyond the control of the employer. All he would be able to do was to make his attitude to the public and to offer his employees appropriate

support if harassment occurred. On the other hand, if the harassment occurred even quite unexpectedly, but in circumstances over which the employer had control, a tribunal might well find that he had subjected his employee to it.

The question of whether an employer had subjected his employee to racial harassment, where a third party was primarily responsible for the harassment, should be decided by the tribunal in its capacity as an industrial jury.

The tribunal should ask itself whether the event in question was something which was sufficiently under the control of the employer that he could, by the application of good employment practice, have prevented the harassment or reduced the extent of it. If such was its finding, then the employer had subjected the employee to the harassment.

The hotel manager ought to have warned his assistant managers to keep a look out for Mr Manning and withdraw the young waitresses if things became unpleasant. He did not do so because he did not give the matter a thought. He should have done.

If the assistant managers had been properly instructed, the two young women would not have suffered any harassment. They might possibly have heard a few offensive words before they were taken away, but that would have been all. Accordingly, the employer "subjected" the appellants to the racial harassment which they received from Mr Manning and the guests.

Solicitors: Mr Khurshid Drabu, Westminster; Mr David Edwards, Warrington.

Digital images equivalent to photographs

Regina v Arnold

Before Lord Justice Evans, Mr Justice Cresswell and Mr Justice Butler

[Judgment September 27]

Images held in digital form on a computer connected to the Internet were copies of photographs for the purposes of section 1 of the Protection of Children Act 1978 and were "distributed or shown" by being made available for access by other computer users. The activities of a defendant who distributed child pornography in that way were also a breach of the Obscene Publications Act 1959 and 1964.

The Court of Appeal so held dismissing appeals by Alan Fellows against conviction and sentence of three years imprisonment by Mr Justice Owen on April 2, 1996 at Birmingham Crown Court for possessing indecent photographs of a child and having an obscene article for publication for gain and by Stephen Arnold against conviction for distributing indecent photographs.

Section 1 of the Protection of Children Act 1978 provides:

"(1) It is an offence for a person—
(a) to take, or permit to be taken, any indecent photograph of a child or to distribute or show such indecent photographs; or
(b) to have in his possession such indecent photographs, with a view to their being distributed or shown."

Section 7, as amended by the

Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, provides:

"(2) References to an indecent photograph include an indecent film, a copy of an indecent photograph comprised in a film...

"(4) References to a photograph include... (b) data stored on a computer disc or by other electronic means which is capable of conversion into a photograph."

Section 1 of the Obscene Publications Act 1959 provides: "(2) In this Act 'article' means any description of article containing or embodying matter to be read looked at or both, any sound record, and any film or other record of a picture or pictures."

Mr Colman Treacy, QC and Mr Alan Evans for the defendants; Mr John Milning, QC, for the prosecution.

LORD JUSTICE EVANS said that a computer specialist at Birmingham University, had used his employers' computer to store data which enabled it to display indecent pictures of children on a computer screen and to produce prints. He had also made that data available on the Internet, so that other computers worldwide could receive and display similar screen images and produce identical prints.

Fellows had controlled access to the archive by means of a password. Arnold was a recipient of material from Fellows' archive, having contributed additional data to it.

They contended at trial that such computer data did not comprise a photograph for the purposes of section 1 of the 1978 Act and that the data were not, in any event, distributed or shown merely by reason of being made available for downloading.

The judge had dismissed those arguments and the defendants had then pleaded guilty.

The judge had taken a broad purposive approach, interpreting the statutes so as to enable them to encompass the storage of pornographic material on computer and its electronic transmission.

The central issue raised by the appeal arose from the fact that in 1959 and 1964 when the Obscene Publications Acts were passed and even in 1978 when the Protection of Children Act was passed, Parliament could not have envisaged the precise capabilities of modern technology, in particular the ability of computers to store data which enabled them to reduce photographs which could be retrieved by any other computer linked telephonically to the storage computer worldwide.

The first appellant had created a data archive stored in the hard disk of the Birmingham computer which was derived from pornographic photographs of children which could be downloaded by other computer users who knew

the correct password. The data could be used to create either screen images or documentary printouts which were indistinguishable from the original photographs.

The second appellant had transmitted files of obscene pictures from his own computer to the Birmingham computer. In return, the first appellant had given him a password to access the data archive.

The court's primary task was to ascertain the meaning of the words in the statute itself and it was only in that sense that what was or might be inferred to have been the intention of Parliament was relevant. In Attorney-General's Reference (No 5 of 1980) (1980) 72 Cr App R 71 a person who provided screen images derived from a video tape was found to have published an obscene article contrary to section 2 of the 1959 Act.

That decision was a direct authority on the issues raised under the 1959 Act in the instant appeal. It was also relevant to the construction of the 1978 Act because the court acknowledged that it was at least doubtful whether in 1959 Parliament had envisaged that video cassettes would become widely available and so provide a means for obscene displays contrary to the Act.

His Lordship reviewed the terms of the 1978 Act and decided that although the computer disk was not a photograph it was "a copy of an indecent photograph". The disk contained data, not visible to the eye, which could be converted by appropriate technical means into a screen image and into a print which exactly reproduced the original photograph from which it was derived.

It was a form of copy which made the original photograph, or a copy of it, available for viewing by a person with access to the disk. There was no restriction on the form of a "copy of an indecent photograph" within section 7(2) and the data represented the original photograph, in another form. That conclusion was supported by *R v Brown (Gregory)* (1996) 1 AC 543.

The definitions in sections 1 and 7(2) were wide enough to include data as well as contemporary forms of copies of photographs. There was ample evidence that the first appellant had actively shown or sought to show the archive to others.

The fact that the recipient obtained an exact reproduction of the photograph contained in the archive in digital form did not mean that the copy photographs in the archive were not held in the first appellant's possession with a view to their being shown to others. The appeals would be dismissed.

Solicitors: Glasfeyr, Birmingham; Crown Prosecution Service, Birmingham.

Council cannot be forced to pay for assessment of child in care

In re C (a Minor) (Local Authority: Assessment)

Before Lord Justice Butler-Sloss, Lord Justice Waite and Lord Justice Roch

[Judgment September 30]

A local authority having interim care of a young child could not be directed by the court to carry out and pay for an assessment of the child together with his parents at a residential home.

Notwithstanding that it was in the child's interest that such assessment should take place, section 38(6) of the Children Act 1989 did not confer jurisdiction on the court to make such a direction.

The Court of Appeal so held in a reserved judgment allowing an appeal by Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council from the direction given by Mr Justice Hogg sitting in Manchester in July 1996 that the child and his parents be placed at a residential assessment unit for three months before final care proceedings were heard.

The parents and the child's guardian ad litem were given leave to appeal to the House of Lords. After the judgment the court

granted an application by the child's parents and the guardian ad litem for leave to move for judicial review of the local authority's decision given in 1996 by the assistant director of social services to continue the child's placement with his foster carer rather than to arrange for the residential placement.

Section 38 of the Children Act 1989 provides: "(6) Where the court makes an interim care order ... it may give such directions if any, as it considers appropriate with regard to the medical, psychiatric examination or other assessment of the child."

Mr A. A. Rumbelow, QC, Mr A. P. Heydon and Miss Gillian Irving for the parents; Mr Lesley Newton for the guardian ad litem; Mrs Jean France-Hayhurst for the local authority.

LORD JUSTICE BUTLER-SLOSS said that in October 1995, the child, born in June 1995, was admitted to hospital suffering from fits. A paediatrician diagnosed non-accidental head injuries.

No satisfactory explanation of the injuries while in the care of his parents had been given. There

remained a question as to whether he has suffered permanent brain damage.

The local authority was granted an interim care order and a guardian ad litem was appointed. On discharge from hospital the child was placed with foster parents.

The parents were young, the mother aged 17 at the time of the birth and the father 16. They were immature and without satisfactory family backing.

The judge, hearing the application before the final contested care proceedings, concluded that it was in the interests of the child that the residential assessment should take place and, relying on the decision of Mr Justice Singer in *In re KP* (unreported, October 11, 1995), held that she had jurisdiction to make the direction under section 38(6).

Unfortunately, although not surprisingly, the judge was not provided with the Court of Appeal decision in *In re M (Minors)* (unreported, July 12, 1996) in which it was held that *In re KP* was wrongly decided.

Before the passing of the 1989 Act the High Court in the exercise

of its *patria potestas* inherent jurisdiction retained control over its wards, even while they were in local authority care.

The 1989 Act retained some elements of the wardship jurisdiction. However, it had been undermined in numerous decisions of the court that on an application before the court, the court made the decision but that when the care order was made the local authority was thereafter free in the day to day management of the child to come back to the court. In general the court could not impose conditions on, nor seek undertakings from, a local authority.

An exception to the general rule was when a child was placed with an authority under an interim order in accordance with section 38.

That section underlined the interface between the court and the local authority and the tensions arising therefrom.

That tension was starkly demonstrated by the present appeal. The consequences of the authority's successful objection to the judge's direction were obvious and disastrous for the parents.

If they did not have the opportunity to take part in a residential assessment and the responsibility for the child's injuries was laid at their door, the outcome of the final hearing before the judge was almost a foregone conclusion.

The court would be deprived of valuable information on which to assess the parents. The crucial decision of the court as to the long term future of the child would, in effect, be pre-empted by the decision of the assistant director of social services.

The issue was whether the jurisdiction of the court under section 38(6) to direct the local authority to carry out medical, psychiatric examination or other assessment of the child extended to directing a residential assessment of the child together with his parents for three months at a cost to the local authority between £18,000 and £24,000.

In re L (a Minor) (unreported, May 22, 1995) Lord Justice Ward had said that section 38(6) did not give the court power to direct where the child should reside during any assessment. He held that by making an interim care order the judge surrendered ultimate control.

In re M (Minors) Lord Justice Swinton Thomas had said that section 38(6) empowered the court to give directions in relation to assessments or examinations of the child. It does not give the court

power to give directions in relation to assessments of the mother or the family as a whole... nor... does the subsection give to the judge... power to direct where a child will live."

That decision was binding on the court. The answer to the appeal was clear and on the facts produced an unhappy result.

The local authority could not be directed to pay for a residential assessment unit for the parents with the child.

In re M her Ladyship said that in that case she had expressed the hope that where a judge had carefully considered the needs of the child and had come to the conclusion that it was in the child's best interests for such an assessment to take place, the local authority would be likely to reconsider its decision.

The present refusal of the local authority, justifiable although it might be on resource grounds, to respond to the decision of a High Court judge that the assessment should go ahead for the sake of the child presented grave difficulties in the resolution of that tension between the court and the local authority.

Lord Justice Waite and Lord Justice Roch agreed.

Solicitors: Norcross Lees & Riches, Oldham and Tenperley Taylor Chadwick, Middleton; Booth & Middleton, Oldham; Mr Andrew Jeffries, Oldham.

Bank need not obey demand for conjectural papers

Regina v O'Kane and Another, ex parte Northern Bank Ltd

Before Mr Justice Ferris

[Judgment August 21]

A person required to produce documents pertaining to inland revenue investigations by a notice under section 20(3) of the Taxes Management Act 1970 fell into the established category of a "mere witness" and a notice made in respect of him should not demand the production of conjectural rather than actual documents.

Mr Justice Ferris, sitting as an additional judge of the Queen's Bench Division, so held in granting the applications of the Northern Bank Ltd for certiorari to quash 13 notices served against it in relation to the affairs of some of its clients under section 20(3) of the Taxes Management Act 1970 by Mr M. J. O'Kane, Mr David McKnight, Mr J. G. Smith and Mr M. A. Clarke.

Section 20 of the 1970 Act, as substituted for the original section by section 57(1) and Schedule 6 to the Finance Act 1976 and amended by sections 142(1) to (8), (10) and 187(1) and Schedule 17 of the Finance Act 1989, provides:

"(3) ... an inspector may, for the purpose of inquiring into the liability of any person, by notice in writing require any other person to deliver to the inspector, or if the person to whom the notice is given so elects, to make available for inspection by a named officer of the board, such documents as are in his possession or power and as (in the inspector's reasonable opinion) contain, or may contain information relevant to any tax liability to which the taxpayer is or may be, or may have been, subject, or to the amount of any such liability."

The bank had received 13 section 20(3) notices in similar terms relating to the affairs of a number of different clients. The documents required for production were listed in a schedule to each notice. Inter alia the schedules referred to:

"2 Record of any deeds ... held."

"Any documentation, notes etc indicating the existence of any other accounts operated by [named taxpayer]."

Mr David Goldberg, QC and

Mr John Walters for the applicant; Ms Geneva Caws, QC and Mr Rabinder Singh for the respondents.

MR JUSTICE FERRIS said that the thrust of the applicant's argument was that the schedule identified not specific documents but classes of documents, documents whose existence was conjectural or categories of documents in respect of which the bank was required to carry out an exercise in judgment in order to determine whether it had or had not in its possession or power documents of the kind identified.

It was clear that outside the scope of the statutory provisions of the kind with which his Lordship was concerned, the courts had recognised a general principle that a mere witness was not to be required to give discovery.

That meant that the witness could not be required to search through his records to see which, if any of them, might be material to the case. In part that was because a mere witness would not ordinarily know what were the issues in the case.

But different considerations applied where the witness could be told what documents he was to look for and to produce. That principle was well established that the legislature ought not to be treated as having overridden it unless clear words were used. A party in the position of the bank in relation to the investigation of the tax liability of one of its customers was a "mere witness".

Section 20(3) of the 1970 Act was not enacted in a context which might suggest that an obligation equivalent to that involved in giving discovery was being imposed.

When, therefore, the principle that a mere witness could not be required to give discovery was taken into account, his Lordship considered that section 20(3) did not allow a notice to be given in respect of conjectural as distinct from actual documents.

It followed that those items which were in the schedules which were expressed in terms which indicated that the draftsman of the notice did not know whether such documents existed but required the bank to consider and inquire whether they did, and if they did to search them out and produce them for inspection were outside the scope of section 20(3).

Solicitors: Cameron Markby Hewitt Treaghy Solicitors.

Priority housing need

Regina v Westminster City Council, ex parte Bishop

Before Mr Justice Hogg

[Judgment August 21]

The correct construction of section 59(1)(b) of the Housing Act 1985 for the purposes of deciding whether an applicant had priority need for housing under Part III of that Act where dependent children were involved was that the child had to be dependent at least in part upon the applicant.

Mr Robin Purchas, QC, sitting

as a judge of the Queen's Bench Division, so held on August 8, when dismissing an application for judicial review of the decision of September 26, 1995 of Westminster City Council that the applicant, Matthew Bishop, the father of two children, who lived apart from the children's mother, did not have a priority need for housing under Part III of the 1985 Act.

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FILM 1

Hollywood raids the library again to make a cool and gritty version of Hardy's *Jude*



FILM 2

Daft laughs wear thin as Eddie Murphy remakes a Jerry Lewis classic, *The Nutty Professor*

THE TIMES ARTS



FILM 3

Meg Ryan and Co delve into the Gulf War's greyer areas in *Courage Under Fire*



FILM 4

Touch of Evil, Orson Welles's creepy thriller, is given a new lease of life

CINEMA: Geoff Brown hails a touching performance by a rising young star in a *Jude* obscured by rain and snow

Winslet wonderful as Wessex girl

Another week, and another milestone of Eng Lit lands in the cinemas. Not that Thomas Hardy's last novel, *Jude the Obscure*, is an obvious candidate for celluloid prettification. There is no social comedy among scapups and crinolines. No rolling green hills, nor pealing church bells. The very first scene of Michael Winterbottom's film — it bears the blunt title *Jude* — thrusts us into an oppressive world, shot in stark black-and-white through the wide-screen lens of Eduardo Serra. A ploughed field. Circling rooks. Young Jude feeds them, when he should be scaring them. The farmer whips him for his pains. Subsequent scenes move into



Kate Winslet gives a "mesmerising, beautifully modulated performance" as Sue Bridehead, seen here at the grave of her son, in Michael Winterbottom's otherwise disappointing *Jude*

SNAP VERDICT

'Hardy as boring as on paper'

Every week, young film fans discuss the latest releases...

JUDE Richard Wright, 20: I thought that with Christopher Eccleston and Kate Winslet this film couldn't fail, but I found it curiously uninvolved.

Holly Peters, 20: I liked the way the film looked — the director obviously didn't want a rosy view of Britain. But it dragged a bit.

Ben Peters, 22: I remember having to do Hardy for A levels, and now I find that he is as boring on film as he is on paper.

Lucy Knight, 22: I liked this a lot — Eccleston was excellent, and I thought bringing the language into the present day worked well. Thoroughly recommended.

THE NUTTY PROFESSOR

Richard: Usually I like Eddie Murphy, but here I found him predictable and tiresome.

Holly: I didn't like this at all — even the adverts on the Tube for it put me off. This isn't even worth buying on video in the £2 dumpbin.

Ben: If this were better directed then I would have enjoyed it a lot more, as I found the story and Murphy quite good fun. However, it wasn't and I didn't.

Lacey: This was a clumsy film — it took the mickey out of fat people and then told us, *Forrest Gump*-style, to accept everybody despite their failings.

COURAGE UNDER FIRE

Richard: Any war film that has Meg Ryan in it can't be that bad. The opening sequence is awesome, and Denzel Washington puts in a fine performance.

Holly: I expected to hate this — anything to do with war bores me — but I found it quite gripping.

Ben: I suppose Gulf War films will soon replace Vietnam films. I'm getting quite bored with jungle, so it's nice to see some sand. Good stuff for a Friday night with the boys.

Lucy: Not really for me, despite Washington's good performance. Still, if your boyfriend drags you along you won't complain too much.

colour. The sun sometimes shines, but the dominant mood remains bleak. Snow blankets the land, or rain tumbles down on to grey stone. There is no fiesta, least of all in the hearts of stonecutter Jude (Christopher Eccleston) and his cousin Sue (Kate Winslet) as they struggle against fate and society's disapproval of unmarried lovers.

Winterbottom loves the fierceness and grit in Hardy's book. This is the man who littered our motorways with corpses in *Butterfly Kiss*, and, on television, held up the mirror to Roddy Doyle's fractious *Family*. Finding modern Dorset too twee to stand in for Hardy's Wessex, he sent his cameras north, to Yorkshire, Northumberland and Edinburgh, in search of savage landscapes and unadorned stone. He also encouraged the writer Hossein Amini to scratch period words from his script, and manufacture a forceful, contemporary-sounding tale of dashed hopes and love fighting against the odds.

Aside from a few over-busting crowds and clip-clopping horses, Winterbottom successfully achieves his lean, mean, modern style. But at what cost? By underlining the grime of Hardy's story he risks emotional monotony and audience disenchantment. And the import of events is often stunted by the script's compression of Hardy's episodic writing. Characters chase each other from place to place at an almost comical speed. One second we hear that Jude has sired a child with his absent wife, good-time girl Arabella; the next the boy stands at the

quayside, shipped all the way from Australia.

Winterbottom's cool, fractured style places a special burden on the performers. Eccleston's Jude, the stonecutter who longs to better himself by learning, is as pained and sensitive as he needs to be, although he could not spot a joke if it fell on his head. So for warmth we must look to Sue Bridehead, the cousin who plunges into a mistaken marriage with Jude's former school teacher, Phillotson. Winslet, flinty and vivacious, dances through the early scenes, but by the end she is wan, drained of life by fate's hard knocks. Hers is a mesmerising, beautifully modulated performance, and she gives Jude a real shot in the arm: not quite enough, though, to prevent audiences themselves feeling drained of life.

If you need a barrel of laughs, there is always Eddie Murphy and his remake of Jerry Lewis's *The Nutty Professor*, an inspired variation on *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. The hero actually looks like a barrel: Professor Sherman Klump weighs 400lb, and can rub off the writing on his blackboard with an accidental

whisk of his tum. In Lewis's original, 33 years ago, the character was a nerdy weed, teeth and glasses permanently askew; but Murphy's revisions allow for fat jokes galore before the potion is drunk and Klump slings down to his alter ego of Buddy Love, a campus Casanova and braggart deluxe.

But are the jokes funny? Yes, at first. Murphy's Klump may be a creature built from foam and make-up, but he still suggests a real human being, sweet and charming. Even when the Klump family congregates for a fusillade of jokes about food and farting, the outrageousness of the comedy softens the crash as the bad taste barrier is broken. (It had to break some time, for the film's director is Tom Shadyac, maestro of *Ace Ventura, Pet Detective*.) There is also another technical stunt to enjoy: Murphy plays all the family members. One child excepted.

But the fun does not last. The film starts losing its appeal once Love takes over Klump's life. Playing a brash, strutting Romeo is nothing unusual for Eddie Murphy, so the

film strays into barren territory. And, as the jokes and vulgarities pile up, you long for the warmth of the earlier scenes when Klump bumped into electric switches, broke a trampoline or shone with quiet delight at an attractive young woman's attention.

Courage Under Fire hails from Edward Zwick, the man who leads a double life as the director of patriotic epics (*Glory*) and the creator of chic TV (*thirtysomething*). This is a Desert Storm story, and audiences outside America will have to wrestle with the film's unquestioning acceptance of the Gulf War's validity.

Patrick Sheane Duncan's artful script does ask some questions, however. Pushed to the backrooms after accidentally invoking friendly fire on one of his own tanks in the desert, Denzel Washington's Lieutenant-Colonel is asked to prepare a report on a Captain's suitability for a posthumous Medal of Honor. The matter should be simple, particularly when the officer is a woman (Meg Ryan); but, as Washington's pain grows over his own Gulf exploits, he discovers conflicting accounts of her behaviour. A tower of strength — or

a quivering coward? Sharp, short flashbacks suggest different answers: this is almost the *Rashomon* of war movies.

For a time these guilts and mysteries prove engaging. But the more Washington delves into Ryan's behaviour, the more her character becomes a gaping hole. Snatched only in brief flashbacks, we never get to know this Captain Karen Walden: she is just Ryan in battle dress. And, by sweeping under the carpet much of war's chaos, the film trivialises Washington's inner battles. The great, probing American movie about Desert Storm is still to be made.

Stories differ over how Orson Welles came to make *Touch of Evil* in 1957, his last brush with the Hollywood studios after years of exile. Some say that after a convivial night he bravely asked to direct the worst script on the shelf of Albert Zugsmith, a maverick producer for Universal. Others, including Welles himself, have said that he was bumped up from actor to director on the project through the powers of Charlton Heston (cast as the narcotics agent Vargas).

Whatever the circumstances, Welles threw all his energies into this astonishing thriller: so much so that his baroque visual style and love of seedy atmosphere swamp the story of murky happenings on the Mexican border. Welles's bulky physical presence dominates too: even Heston is cut down to size by his corrupt detective Hank Quinlan, decay oozing from every pore. The famous opening travelling shot sets the scene with a tremendous flourish, and the visual wonders never stop. This is an unbalanced film, but a great one.

Placed alongside *Touch of Evil*, a worthy new film such as *Letters from the East* has all the gleam of a dead fish. Andrew Grieve's inert drama focuses on an Estonian-born woman (Ewa Fröling), long in England, searching for her lost mother as the old country gropes towards independence. Britain, Germany, Finland, Sweden and the European honey-pot all helped to fund the project: but this dull, over-earnest film never gives an audience of any nationality sufficient reason to plunk down money at the box office.



A leaner, meaner Brett Anderson gives his all as Suede leave the frustrations of the past few years behind them

Step aside, Oasis, the hard men are back

It is a cruel irony that Suede, who carried the torch for new British pop single-handedly during 1992 and 1993, should have been eclipsed by the Britpop explosion they did so much to inspire. Their third album, *Coming Up*, briefly topped the charts a month ago, and their press releases still optimistically refer to them as "officially the best band in the world". But theirs is now just one of several competing claims to the title and, having been the Oasis of their day, they have now dropped to the status of underdog.

On the second night of their British tour, at Glasgow's Barrowland, they handled the new situation with the same dignity and strength of resolve that they have always exhibited. With the stage bathed in pools of blood-red light they entered to the strains of a pseudo string arrangement of *She*, which gave way to Simon Gilbert's heavy pounding drumbeat then, as Brett Anderson shimmered up to the microphone stand, they simply exploded into life, powering their way in quick succession through *Trash*, *Heroine* and *Animal Nitrate*, with a sense of gleeful urgency

POP Suede Glasgow

that was an absolute joy to behold. It was a sensational start to a set that threw into sharp relief the stodgy performance values that have come to be regarded as the norm among their Britpop successors. It was certainly a far more entertaining display than the thug-boy posturing and routine three-chord strumming of Oasis, whatever the relative appeal of Noel Gallagher's songs.

Guitarist Richard Oakes has metamorphosed from the timid schoolboy who stood self-consciously rooted to the spot during their tour of 1994-95 into a guitar god. Not only did he play brilliantly — from the stabbing metallic shapes of *So Young* to the delicately lilting cadences of *By the Sea* — but he fully looked the part, chasing the beat with little lunges of his head and stamping his personality on the show.

New member Neil Codling

fleshed out the sound with discreet keyboard parts, but made his most telling contribution to the night as a backing vocalist, his harmonies, especially on *The Wild Ones*, lending extra melodic richness to the songs.

But it was Anderson who led the way with purposeful authority. Looking about a stone lighter than when the band last toured, he performed with tremendous energy and style, twirling the microphone above his head, but somehow managing not to hit anything except the intended notes.

There were lots of technical reasons for admiring this show — whether it be the clever lighting design, the subtle changes of backdrop or simply the brash elegance of it all. But at the end of the day it was just brilliant to have them back.

DAVID SINCLAIR

● Suede play the Octagon, Sheffield, tonight. De Montford Hall, Leicester, tomorrow. Victoria Halls, Hanley, on Saturday. Town and Country, Leeds, on Monday. Hall City Hall, on Tuesday and Kilburn National, London, on Thursday

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■ VISUAL ART

Pop goes the easel: Peter Blake has fun with the Old Masters at the National Gallery



■ THEATRE 1

Ian Brown leaves the Traverse for a date at the Donmar with Sam Shepard's *Fool for Love*

THE TIMES
ARTS

■ THEATRE 2

The Royal Court maintains its name for provocative drama with a new rent-boy play



■ TOMORROW

Game for a fiddle: will Ken Campbell's *Violin Time* enchant the National?

California dreaming

VISUAL ART: Peter Blake crosses new boundaries through the Old Masters in his new exhibition. Isabel Carlisle reports

The National Gallery recently announced that it was handing over all its post-1900 paintings to the Tate, and then a week later opened a show by Pop artist Peter Blake. What is it up to? Clearly it recognises that rational boundaries can be positively subverting when it comes to creativity, especially when that creativity includes making an essentially static national collection come alive again and again in different ways.

Bringing a living artist in to shake up the Old Masters forces a new take on the collection. Whether that artist's work should then be measured against the gallery's permanent paintings is not the point. Blake's exhibition sets up a visible dialogue between the art of today and that of the past: the creativity lies in removing boundaries and making connections.

Peter Blake is not one to pay heed to boundaries: he has made the in-between world of fantasy and disjunction his own territory. He continues to prove his ability to reinvent himself by turning to new subjects and exploring new techniques. As artist in residence at the National Gallery for the past two years, he has come up with a show based on the permanent collection that in its humour cocks a snook at those who take art too seriously, and in its serious handling of paint reminds us that art is a process, not just a finished picture.

Blake has slipped Old Masters into his collage works in the past. He produced a reprise of Landseer's *Monarch of the Glen* in 1966 in which 3-D lettering reduced that Victorian icon to instant kitsch. In the early Eighties he based his *Have a Nice Day, Mr Hockney* on Courbet's *Bonjour Monsieur Courbet*. Blake's painting hangs in the opening section of this exhibition as a reference point, with a postcard of the Courbet next to it. In transposing the three figures of Courbet's painting to the present-day boardwalk on Venice Beach, California — casting David Hockney as Courbet, Peter Blake as his patron and Howard Hodgkin as his deferential servant — Blake introduces his characteristic flavour of unreality.

At the National Gallery, Blake has gone on to produce a whole series of *Venice Beach Madonnas*, taking madonnas by Old Masters and importing them wholesale into Venice Beach settings to produce a startling contrast between them and now. Directly copied from Dieric Bouts, the Netherlandish madonna in *Madonna of Venice Beach I* offers the naked Christ child her breast (an act of public indecency which the

LAPD would track down on fast) right on the edge of the rollerskating path. She is as much locked into her own world as the two skaters in the foreground are locked into sun, sea and the cult of the body beautiful. It is funny: it shocks; it is beautifully painted; but it ultimately disappoints by being tricky and facile in the way that an obvious formula inevitably becomes facile.

Blake's greatest success in the "Old Masters go to California" genre is *After Longhi: Exhibition of a Rhinoceros at Venice*. The foreground is Longhi's scene of masked figures in carnival dress looking down on the rhino in his pen; behind, the Venice Beach boardwalk with rollerskaters and palm trees; and along the back a high wall painted with snippets of frescoes by Tiepolo. Eighties California (note the absence of in-line skates) is sandwiched between two layers of 18th-century Venice. The bare flesh of Tiepolo's decorous women sets up an intriguing contrast between the artistic nude and the photographically derived naked limbs of the skaters.

Pure frivolity and fun take over in *The Venuses Outing to Weymouth*, complete with 1930s charabanc in the far distance. It's a game of "spot the artist" with sunbathing lovelies copied from Venuses by Titian, Giorgione, Velázquez, Cranach, Correggio and Bronzino. Two attendant cupids play cricket on the beach originally painted by Constable. Being unfinished, it has a spontaneity and visible delight in handling paint.

This looser technique becomes wonderfully sensual in *After a Copy of Michelangelo's Leda and the Swan*. To his contemporaries Michelangelo was famous for his ability to excel in both sculpture and paint. Today his contours look unyieldingly hard and his colours far removed from the glow of 16th-century Venetian painting.

Blake has come up with a Titianesque rendering of one of the most erotic paintings in the National Gallery, Michelangelo, in the lost original of this work, was repeating the classical tradition of explicit depictions of the coupling of Zeus, in the form of a swan, with the mortal Leda. Blake's is a work in progress in thin oils that stain rather than coat the canvas, but I find the effect glorious: it should be left as it is. I would guess that Blake, like so many artists before him, has found in copying the Old Masters a new way forward in his art.

Now We Are 64 is in the Sunley Room, National Gallery, Trafalgar Square, London WC2 (0171-839 3321) until Jan 5



Madonna of Venice Beach I, from a series by Blake that puts madonnas by Old Masters into beach settings

CONCERTS

A sight and sound show

GIVEN the right conductor, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra is still one of the best of British ensembles. That much was clear in the first concert of the new season in the Usher Hall, where Alexander Lazarev secured from the RSN the kind of brilliance it has displayed only rarely since the precipitate departure of Neeme Järvi eight years ago. Although he lacks Järvi's all-round virtuosity, Lazarev does have the ability to motivate an orchestra, which can be grudging with its enthusiasm.

So when Lazarev takes over from Walter Weller as principal conductor of the RSN next year, it should be a very useful partnership. There could be occasions when the odd item is under-rehearsed, like Rimsky-Korsakov's *May Night Overture* in this concert, and when one is moved to wonder about the conductor's ability to solve problems on the spot. But once the impulse is there, this is the musician to sustain and convert it into inspiration.

RSNO/Lazarev
Edinburgh

The sight of Lazarev whirling his baton over his head like a helicopter blade in the second movement of Rachmaninov's Second Symphony was only less remarkable than the sound that went with it. There were awkward moments in this performance too, but the willingness to take risks, the consistent expectancy in the rhythms, the generosity of the instrumental colouring, the vividly three-dimensional quality of the textures were indications of commitment to an interpretation of rare spontaneity.

GERALD LARNER

Spanish gain

Philharmonia/
Frühbeck de Burgos
Festival Hall

FEW recent musical anniversaries have been marked more constructively than the centenary of Roberto Gerhard's birth, which fell last week. Since his death in exile in Cambridge 26 years ago, the importance of this individual voice in 20th-century music has been only intermittently reflected. It has taken this year's performances to reveal the rich variety of his output.

Saturday's early evening concert, part of the Philharmonia Orchestra's *Music of Today* series, gave us three pieces. The composer's roots in Catalonia were firmly established in his exuberant *Sardana No 1*. His studies with Schoenberg resulted in the serialism we heard in the *Nonet*, though the technique was not rigidly applied in this work. Stefan Asbury conducted a fluid performance.

Most memorable of all was the *Pandora Suite*, drawn from the anti-Fascist ballet *Gerhard* wrote in the early 1940s. In his modern reinterpretation of the myth, the contents of Pandora's box include materialism and to-

talitarianism, and the sensuous music suggests that the composer was responding to Franco's suppression.

Gerhard must be kept in the concert repertoire, and if other music needs to make way it could include Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben*, featured in the Philharmonia's main programme. Although the tempestuous opening was not quite together, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos almost made this overblown tone-poem sound like a good work.

Frühbeck de Burgos's Beethoven before the interval was in the traditional mould. He conducted an arresting account of the Overture to *The Creatures of Prometheus*, and was a sensitive accompanist to the impressive young virtuoso Boris Berezovsky in the Piano Concerto No 1.

JOHN ALLISON

THEATRE: Ian Brown tells why he gave up job security for the precarious life of a freelance director; plus a new play with few expletives deleted

New labour, different dangers

Job security has never been one of the employment benefits enjoyed by arts workers in general and theatre practitioners in particular. Even so, it might seem strange — foolhardy, even — for a

director who has established himself at the head of one of the country's most respected and successful producing theatres to step down and pursue a freelance career.

But, after eight years as

artistic director of Edinburgh's Traverse Theatre, Ian Brown is looking forward to a bit of insecurity. "It's going to be an interesting balance between earning a living and being true to my artistic self," he says. "I have to prove myself: I have to compete on the open market. But that is the adventure. You can't just sit back and let the money roll in."

With the standard rates for freelance directors being what they are — Cameron Mackintosh muscled excepted — there seems little chance of that. Brown may have arrived in London without, as he puts it, "a huge mountain of work", but it seems unlikely his diary will stay blank for long. His first production for the Donmar Warehouse, a revival of Sam Shepard's *Fool for Love*, opens tonight. Then he will direct the first stage adaptation of an Armistead Maupin novel — *Babycakes* from the *Tales of the City* series — for Clyde Unity Theatre in the new year. Planned for next spring is the European premiere of Ariel Dorfman's *Windows*.

Not bad for a self-proclaimed "new director in town", the man who accepted the Donmar job because "Sam Mendes was the first person to make me an offer. In fact, the only thing that seems to be missing from Brown's current schedule is the endless stream of paperwork that inevitably taxes an artistic director. He denies, though, that this was a factor in his departure from the Traverse.

"A myth went round that I left because the administrative burden was so horrendous I wasn't prepared to do it any more, but that's just baloney. It is hard work trying to marry the two sides of the job, but if

you are going to run a theatre, that's what you do."

Brown concedes that he did find the continual round of funding battles exhausting, but says he left the Traverse for entirely personal reasons — "to do different things in different situations."

"I felt that I'd been there long enough. I strongly believe that artistic directors should move on and let somebody else have a go. I would have been quite happy to stay in Scot-



Ian Brown: hard at work

land, but the opportunities just aren't there any more. Not on a full-time basis."

Which brings us to the other rumour that has circulated — particularly among London theatre observers — about Brown's decision to leave the Traverse: namely, that Scottish theatre has become a bit parochial and its writers stuck in a nostalgic rut.

"I don't think that's true at all," he says. "Scottish theatre has its problems just now, but they are mainly to do with the slow starving to death of

companies through lack of funding. You can't justify a theatre's existence unless it is able to produce a reasonable body of work, and you will only get good product coming out of a theatre if it can produce enough work to have some major hits and plays that maybe aren't commercial, but nevertheless need to be done. Theatre needs to invest in longer rehearsal periods and give writers a bit more breathing space, but there is a price that has to be paid for that."

Risk-free theatre is a tactic that Brown has never employed himself. The not inconsiderable highlights of his years at the Traverse were never obvious from the start. Stephen Mulrine's adaptation of *Moscow Stations*, which transferred, with Tom Courtenay, to London and New York, and James Keenan's *Hardie and the Baird* were, Brown says, almost anti-theatrical. Brad Fraser's *Poor Superman* and Harry Gibson's original adaptation of *Trainspotting* "were huge risks". Even the success of Sue Glover's *Bondage* — by general consensus, the biggest hit of Brown's Traverse tenure — took him by surprise.

Shepard, by comparison, might be considered a safe commercial bet these days. But *Fool for Love* is, Brown says, not to be underestimated. "It is one of those hermetically sealed plays. A bit like Beckett, it exists as an entity and it doesn't give up its secrets easily. Sure, it's a risk, but that's what makes it worthwhile."

CHRISTOPHER BOWEN

● *Fool for Love* runs from tonight until November 30 at the Donmar Warehouse, Earlham Street WC2 (0171-369 1732)

A four-letter world

Shopping
Ambassadors

THE title of Mark Ravenhill's first play is not publishable in full in a nice family newspaper, and appears in an oddly bowdlerised form even on the placards outside what used to be the Ambassadors, and now calls itself the Royal Court's Theatre Upstairs in exile. *Shopping and nudge-nudge*, these proclaim in good wink-wink, nudge-nudge style. The impression given — all the stronger because Soho is hard by — is that behind the ornate foyer is Britain's latest contribution to convenience buying, a supermarket-cum-brothel. Girls on the shelves, cans of tomatoes in the beds, and reward cards for particularly loyal customers in dirty mags.

Actually, those who venture into the theatre in that frame of mind won't be wholly disappointed. There are no tomatoes on sale, which probably irked the man who stomped out halfway through Act II, looking as if he would like to throw one or two at the stage. But there is a fair amount of stimulation of gay sex, some of it pretty adolescent, some more complete. What Caesar's soldiers famously did to a Druid in Howard Brenton's *Romans in Britain*, a couple of London layabouts do to the saddest of Ravenhill's sad characters, a 14-year-old rentboy escaping a sexually rapacious stepfather.

I dare say the play will pick up reviews along the lines of Sarah Kane's *Blasted*, which included scenes of cannibalism and eye-gouging as well as rape. But that would be unfair. We must expect the Court to be, the Court even when it is temporarily ban-



Kate Ashfield as Lulu in a drama of disenchantment

ished from Sloane Square. Equally, we should expect Max Stafford-Clark's *Out of Joint*, the company presenting the play, to be out of joint. And the play is not an exercise in titillation but the latest contribution to a growing genre, the drama of disenchantment, the theatre of urban ennui.

But is it an effective contribution or, as I sometimes felt, a derivative one? The bleakness of Ravenhill's young London is not in doubt. The characters inhabit a sub-world in which shopping means stealing frozen Thai meals from Tesco and a job consists of selling Ecstasy for a sentimental suburbanite who is nevertheless prepared to punish debtors with chain-saws. Antony Ryding's Gary, the 14-year-old selling his favours above an amusement arcade, typifies the town. So

does James Kennedy's Mark, a recovering druggie simultaneously yearning for and in flight from human affection.

With Robin Soans, Kate Ashfield and Andrew Clover completing the cast, the acting does not lack quality. But my personal jury will remain out on Ravenhill's writing until his next play. I would like to think that the scenes in which Gary begs for a father to rape him, or implores his attackers to destroy his bowels with screwdrivers, come from genuine horror at a sick world. But I did wonder if Ravenhill was whipping himself into a state of formulaic dismay at the awfulness of things. Either way, the effect is of a southern *Trainspotting* with more sex and fewer laughs.

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Roy Porter admires the breadth of vision found in a masterful account of a continent divided and united by history

From Lublin to Dublin

Europeans and Europhiles alike could seek comfort from this tour de force survey of the rise of Europe from Stone Age to New Age. Septics might seize upon Professor Davies's masterly demonstration of the infinite diversity and discord of Europe's past. Where Europe starts and stops has never been clear. The Mediterranean united yet divided three continents: "Greek" civilisation developed around the coast of Turkey; Constantinople, so long the hub of the Roman or Byzantine Empire, fell to the Ottomans and became Istanbul; and the Russian question (part of Europe or not?) is as far from resolution as ever.

As Davies's superb gallery of easy-to-read sketch-maps shows, the map of Europe has incessantly been redrawn. Power has perpetually ebbed and flowed from north to south and east to west. In this day and age, it is hard to imagine that Spain was once the scourge of Europe — only to be succeeded in the early 17th century, however briefly, by Sweden! Europe, Davies insists, has been and remains deeply divided by climate and creeds, Diets and diet.

Of course, from Alexander the Great to Chancellor Kohl, rulers have staked their claims to some grander unity or at least mastery: there was the Roman Empire and the Holy Roman Empire, Napoleon and Hitler and their imperial dreams, while the Pope professed plenitude of spiritual power. But all proved rhetoric, not reality, and attempts to impose unity only worsened divisions — witness the never-healed schism between the Vatican and the Greek Orthodox Church. In short, though the idea of unity has often been floated, the truth has been Europe divided.

Yet all that may miss the point. For the overwhelming moral of the edifying events traced in this book is that, at bottom, all of Europe has been in the same boat — or rather

in one huge peninsula stuck like a great nose at the west end of Asia, subject for centuries to swarm after swarm of invasions from the Steppes, most recently from the Soviet Union. While Europe has never been united, the fates of all its nations have been unextricably interwoven, and the cost of conflict has been the interminable series of wars (lately in the former Yugoslavia) upon whose futile horrors Davies sombrely dwells. "Europe" may be a phantom, but the peoples of the peninsula have a common experience to share.

That is why Davies is right to be dismissive about the self-satisfied myopia pervading our sense of history. At school we mainly learn the history of England (sometimes

These days enterprises like this — over 1,000 pages long — are generally ground out by committee. This one is all the better from being the work of one pen, one sensibility. Professor Davies's forte lies not in dramatic narrative or lofty generalisation but in his eye for gritty-gritty facts and the ironies of events. To ensure that vital details do not get lost in the fates of nations he ingeniously embeds into his master-text some 200 data "capsules", ranging from Auschwitz to Zeus, and including forays into such things as political colour-coding (why are Communists Red?) and how the roots of Ulster's Orange Order lie in the South of France.

They provide lay-bys off the highroad of history, convenient pausing places for the panting reader. They also allow Davies to pepper his work with his characteristically pungent opinions. Surveying the history of printing, he records that in the good old days the Oxford University Press could bring out a book in a matter of weeks — the point being that his own *magnum opus* has been three years in production.

Broadcasting in 1938 on his return from Munich, Neville Chamberlain bewailed the prospect of war "in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing". Professor Davies is clearly of the opinion that, had we not been so smugly ignorant, war might have been less likely. If, unlike Chamberlain, you think it important to learn about the Czechs and their history — and about the Russians and the Rutenians, about Belgium and Belarus, about Europe from Dublin to Lublin, and our place in that continent's history, this book is a must — and a sumptuous mental feast.

Professor Norman Davies will be interviewed by Valerie Grove in *The Times* on Monday.

EUROPE
A History
By Norman Davies
OUP, £25
ISBN 0 19 32071 0

masquerading as "Britain") with snippets of Western Europe thrown in when necessary; or we trace the "rise of the West", which turns out to be a barely veiled version of Anglocentrism. How many of us ever find out about the goings-on in Mitteleuropa or the Mediterranean, about Lithuania or (Davies's great specialty) about Poland? Yet they have shaped our fates.

As one would expect from a protégé of the great gadfly, A. J. P. Taylor, Davies has no truck with grandiose theorising and espies no great transcendental patterns or purposes; but if he is sceptical about visionary notions of some European Manifest Destiny, he is even more scathing towards blinkered Little England fantasies. The one lesson Davies's historical anatomy of Europe indubitably teaches is the ludicrousness of insularity: no island is an island.

To the proposition that Leo Abse is crazy, I offer my assent. So was Nietzsche. So was Dali.

To the proposition that old age is robbing the 30-year-old former Welsh Labour MP of his marbles, I return an emphatic No. Mr Abse's marbles have always been arranged unconventionally. He proceeds by the inspired rant. As a lonely crusader for social causes, almost all of which are now accepted as right, Abse ranted in his Commons days; he was ranting later when he wrote *Margaret, Daughter of Beatrice*, a psycho-political tirade against the mother-erasing Thatcher. People scoffed — then quietly acknowledged his insight. He was ranting when he wrote his tirade against the whole German nation, *Wotan*

My Enemy. The day approaches when the work will be seen as visionary.

And Mr Abse is ranting now in *The Man Behind the Smile*. His shocking assertion is that the leader of the Labour Party is an androgynous — though mercifully the author stops short of suggesting that anything is amiss with Mr Blair's sexual apparatus. Age does not weary the exotism of Abse's tirades.

Often heavy-going and in places — frankly — opaque, this book assumes the mantle of psychoanalysis. Examining Tony Blair's eccentric family history, Abse uncovers (he

believes) a parenting which left the boy who, at choir school used to pray with his headmaster, emotionally incomplete: a young man with an unsecured personality, cleaving now to rock music, now to Christianity as he grasped at templates for his own identity which his upbringing never supplied.

He diagnoses in Blair's personality an hysterical rejection of challenge: scrambling for authority as a substitute for reason. His worshipping of authoritarian leadership is linked, Abse thinks, to emotional insecurity; and this is what underlies the "consensus by diktat" he imposes. Abse finds Blair utterly different from Margaret Thatcher: she relished a scrap; he reinvents reality, writing conflict out of the script.

In the tense male relationships among the close-knit "new" Labour gang encircling the leadership, Abse detects an unconscious, homosexual rivalry he says can exist even between heterosexuals.

At this study's core are two linked assertions. Abse believes Blair's personality is — because not properly keyed into the male and female paradigms which parenting should provide — incomplete, androgynous, cold, coy, corrosively cute, and adrift: the

Matthew Parris
THE MAN BEHIND THE SMILE
Tony Blair and the Politics of Perversion
By Leo Abse
Robson Books, £16.95 ISBN 1 861 05 078 X
FACES OF LABOUR The Inside Story
By Andy McSmith
Verso, £16 ISBN 1 85984 968 7
NEW BRITAIN My Vision of a Young Country
By Tony Blair
Fourth Estate, £8.99 ISBN 1 85702 436 2



Blair under scrutiny at Loughborough University, January

David Bowie of Centre politics. This inward androgyny has invaded his approach to policymaking. Ruthlessly — desperately — intent on defining his own personality through Office, he is oddly

and "youth" — concepts in the deepest sense jejune — as though they answer the question. "New Labour. New Britain. The party renewed. The country reborn. New Labour. New Britain."

This drives Abse, an old man of the Left, to a fine rallery. Sample his dense, weird, intuitively persuasive style: "As Blair and his impertinent young political pups wage war on Old Labour... as they seek to kill off their fathers, these political adolescents boost themselves with a dangerous amnesia and, thus drugged, the courageous youngsters, manned with piss-poor erections, dare to obliterate the reality that the most radical and 'regenerative' Labour government, that brought us the welfare state, was led by old men..."

In this, as in all Abse's work, I find the coupling of theoretical pretension with palpable spite an unhappy tangle. The whole endeavour is easy to dismiss. In the end, Abse can only be guessing. These guesses, however, seem to me to be touched by genius. Perhaps I am prejudiced. My own view is that Tony Blair is an alien from the Planet Vanilla.

Read the chapter on Blair in Andy McSmith's *Faces of Labour*. The scrupulous McSmith, whose notably cool

biography of John Smith was unaccountably received as a homage, tries to be fair to Mr Blair and would be horrified to hear his book coupled with Abse's. But his attempt to describe where the Labour leader is coming from, where he is going to — indeed, where he might be at the moment, leaves the reader with a weird sense of vacuum. The chapter is one of seven readable and revealing studies of key or typical Labour figures, one of whom, Peter Mandelson, has described McSmith as "one of the most biased, ill-informed, malicious and unpleasant journalists in Westminster". Coming from Mr Mandelson, such a citation would make a tolerably good library out of a library with only McSmith's book in it.

If you still think Abse absurd, read *New Britain: My Vision of a Young Country*, a collection of the Labour leader's speeches. It includes photographs of Mr Blair giving the blind David Blunkett an arm, Blair eating fish and chips in Sedgfield and John Prescott with his head in his hands. The speeches are unmitigated pap.

The note on the back cover begins, "Tony Blair has nothing to hide". After a day struggling with Abse's Freudianism, I cannot escape the secondary meaning of that sentence. Nothing may be precisely what it is that Tony Blair has to hide.

The faces of Tony Stardust

Sebastian Barry

DAMNED TO FAME
The Life of Samuel Beckett
By James Knowlson
Bloomsbury, £25
ISBN 0 7475 2719 9
SAMUEL BECKETT
The Last Modernist
By Anthony Cronin
HarperCollins, £25
ISBN 0 246 13769 X

thundering silently out of both books is an ordinary man on an epic scale, both very much the middle-class Protestant of his day and the rather separate, strange, blue-eyed revenant full of dreams and memories. He was self-haunted. His story is an engrossing one, with hints of heroism during the Second World War in France, and a victory over some of the more poisonous aspects of himself. The very architecture of his small house at Ussy bespeaks plainness, restraint, and if not repose (he was rarely in repose) a real humility. In him presided the Quaker strain of his ancestry, seen also in his late prose style.

Beckett required privacy and yet was very willing to meet those who contacted him in Paris, filtered through a reliable friend like Con Leventhal. He used people close to him fairly baldly in his early fiction, hurt them, but regretted it all his life. He seems to have been pretty complicated and even jagged in his sexual make-up, not liking to mix sex and love, but was faithful and true to many friends and was sorely oppressed by their deaths. He felt he had let his parents down but responded deeply to the emergencies of his mother's last days and indeed



Beckett: both ordinary and epic

nursed his brother, most movingly, when he was dying of cancer. He never had much money until his parents died but when he did have it he gave it freely to others. He found it a terrible trial to write but did so until the very end, almost till the day he died.

He was married but to some degree lived the life of an Irish bachelor in classic Dublin fashion. He was immensely well-read but insisted eventually on his essential ignorance, man's ignorance, a factor that Cronin rightly identifies as the great seed of his mature output. He shuffled off the coil of Joyce's influence, kept Dante by his bed to the last, the kinder influence. He loved his father, who was reasonably content with the world, and equally his mother, who was not.

He was racking with contradictions, no saint but a secular man engaged in the remaking of literature's rules, the second time in the century that an Irish writer had achieved this. He believed in nothing, embraced the diminished man wherever found, did no fashionable things, and was and is a severe light. Both Anthony Cronin and James Knowlson have written extraordinary accounts of this life, heroic and trivial, victorious and defeated. They are both very long books, which is somehow appropriate as a final contradiction for a man whose last brief works tended passionately to silence.

Master of the Indian rope trick

CLIVE JAMES'S great gift, while more crudely described as that of the gab, is really to be able to make, balancing on a tightrope of irony and glee, a delicious word-soufflé that tastes somehow both of snideness and of sympathy.

These skills are evident, in appropriately "Bollywoodian" opulence, in this madcap fable about the Bombay film world. His words whirling like dervishes, James tells us the tale of Sanjay, a clever, good-looking slum urchin who, having stumbled by a mixture of curiosity and accident upon a film set swarming with awe-inspiring film-wallahs,

Tunku Varadarajan

THE SILVER CASTLE
By Clive James
Jonathan Cape, £15.99
ISBN 0 224 03846 6

catches early in his life an obsessive fever for his city's cinematic world. (Like all powerful fevers, it grips hard: the reader is transported along as if captured in Sanjay's backpack, snuggled next to the gold earring which the boy finds on the severed ear of a dead Parsi woman, dropped at his feet by a satiated culture.)

The *Silver Castle* is often hardly credible, but that is not the point. James has here captured a cinematic genre and placed it with aplomb between the hard covers of a book. If you are a Hindi film virgin (and most people in this country, to their great loss, are), I give you this advice: where possible, go to your nearest Indian video-rental shop (or, still better, go to one of the few remaining cinema halls in Britain where Hindi films are still screened) and

submerge yourself in a film or two. (I especially recommend *Don*, starring the great Amitabh Bachchan in a "double role", and the irrepressible Amar Akbar Anthony, known as "Triple A" to true buffs.)

Savour the cloying music. Savour the ludicrous sets. Savour, even, the glamour which casts so firm a spell over the Indian sub-continent: big hips and bigger breasts, yummy-wet saris, slick men who are as adept at dancing as they are at beating up a pulp, on their own, a hundred thugs or more, all of them armed with iron bars, and sometimes even guns. Good guys, bad guys, good girls, bad girls, this world is manic and manicured, the Big Screen as Great Escape.

THIS is the world of *The Silver Castle*, the world about which Sanjay from the bustee dreams. James's "hero" (and I use the word here in a deliberately Bollywood sense), is a high-calibre character who turns his dreams into rope and hauls himself into the bedrooms of glamorous actresses, having first slept with an assortment of junior Bombay Fagins, as well as a full bag of moneyed pederasts (or *gendas*, as Sanjay would have called them) who pay him handsomely for his complaisance and even teach him to speak a passable, if stilted, version of English.

James's own English, mirroring Sanjay's, is sometimes Baroque ("the echoing, Acherontic ostinato of Victoria Terminus") and sometimes bone-dry. Occasionally, however, one must find fault with him: not with his language, of course, over which he is clearly master, but with his philosophical conceits. There is one terrible spurge (I forewarn you, please skip pages 44 to 46) on the comparative character of languages, with such arse-aching attempts to *épater la bourgeoisie* as this: "English could be learned much more quickly if it were written down in the Russian Cyrillic alphabet, the only logical aspect of the Russian language."

But I carp. In subtle and tragic ways, this book reaches parts Bollywood does not, and cannot reach. James, inevitably, finds unreality too unoperative. I will not tell you what happens in the end to Sanjay. That would only spoil the film.

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هكذا من الأصل

Norman Lewis is swept along by a traveller's odyssey through a prairie wilderness where little is too strange to be true

In a barren and dry land

BAD LAND
An American Romance
By Jonathan Raban
Picador, £15.99
ISBN 0 330 34621 0

Jonathan Raban is fascinated by extremes in nature. His portrait of the Mississippi in *Old Glory* is painted in descriptive passages of a river that can rarely have been equalled. Now when he turns his attention to another natural immensity, we follow him in the knowledge that beauty, however strange, is about to be revealed among the drab landscapes of a wasteland.

The badlands of Montana lie adjacent to North Dakota and the Canadian border, and appear as a bald patch in any but a large-scale map. Much of the area is a prairie in which "the intruder is humbled by featureless space". Nothing grows there but sage brush and wiry grass known as nigger wool. There are no trees.

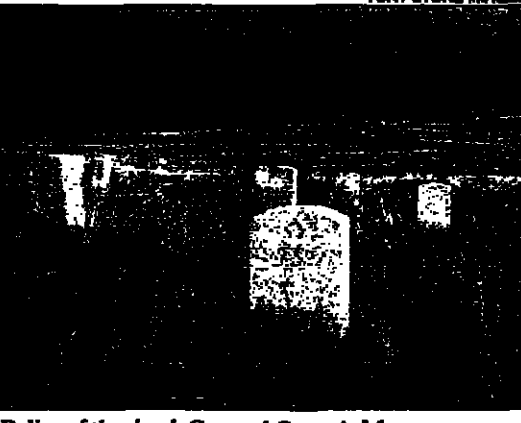
Driving across this huge emptiness Jonathan Raban notes the shallow grooves worn by the single-file herds of buffaloes a century ago. "The whole country," he writes, "presented itself as a graveyard, it was so strewn with relics of the dead." The remains of a Ford Model T lie on the prairie as if "it had fallen out of the sky". "The dead had left their stuff lying around to dissolve back into nature in its own time and at its own pace."

He pulls up to explore an abandoned house. Swallows have nested on the parlour walls, decayed furniture is still in place, and clothes hang in wardrobes. "I reached for a dress but mildewed cotton came away in my hand like a fistful of spiderweb." Perhaps an opportunity to make their getaway had sparked off irresistible panic in this family and they had just rushed out of the place.

These were the people of Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* — victims of one of the cruellest deceptions in history. By 1909, the time of the Homestead Act, the Government of the day was determined to fill the great empty spaces of the West. Expanding

railroads were hungry for passengers and the banks for customers who could be persuaded to take up loans. The trap was 320 acres of free land offered to each family of homesteaders and pamphlets illustrating the rich farmland and lush pastures to be given away were sent out to every country in Europe. In response to these allures, many penniless, arrived by the thousand to be whisked away to a desert and left largely to their own resources, whether to go under or at most scrape through.

Officially this was semi-arid territory with a rainfall as low as any area on earth capable of supporting human life. A best-selling book, *Campbell's Soil Culture Manual*, had been hastily published to convince the hesitant



Relics of the dead: General Custer's Montana grave

that farming was at its best in a dry climate such as this, since rainfall leached goodness from the soil. In all other ways the climate was extreme. As an experiment the author set off on a night walk in January with the thermometer registering minus 29 degrees. "If I parted my lips just a fraction I bit

on a sliver of pure cold, as sharp and palpable as a knifeblade... one had to conserve each sniff for as long as possible before the next painful, cautious in-draft." Luckily for Raban he had not chanced on a really cold night, when the temperature often dropped to 40 below.

There were other climatic hazards, for although it hardly ever rained the badlands suffered hailstorms with stones up to five inches in diameter, which destroyed light planes and drove the homesteaders to take refuge underground. Cyclones snatched up telegraph poles and sent them spinning into the sky. Other terrors included plagues of grasshoppers, confirming the suspicions of the many students of the *Book of Revelation* among the

settlers that doomsday was at hand.

As for farming, it was found that ploughing destroyed the precarious fertility of the land. The only successful crop was turnips which grew to phenomenal sizes, one establishing a world record of 18lb. It was on these that the homesteaders sometimes subsisted, although a few scrawny chickens and an undersized pig might also be raised. The author notes the prevalence of extreme forms of religion. Curiously the Adventists made things worse for themselves by opposing irrigation.

Sixty-five years have gone by since the flight from the badlands, and signs of life are returning to the grey moonscape of Montana. Agencies arrange sentimental journeys for the descendants of those who once suffered here. More come on "novelty-seekers" tours, amused by trips to towns with names like Musselshell, Crackerville and

Zero where what is left of the past is scrupulously preserved. Most noted of these is Joe, Montana — once called Ismay but renamed, in a bid for fame, after the American football player Joe Montana. It has the top novelty-rating based on population decline from about 4,000 to 28. Its annual fête draws up to 8,000 visitors, who pay, Raban says, \$35 a head to walk in the ruins of its raped-off streets, witness a rodeo and refresh themselves at the gas station with a microwaved snack in a plastic sacker, washed down with a Big Gulp Diet Pepsi.

Raban spoke to the 28 while they were waiting to be flown, all expenses paid, to New York to appear on the David Letterman show — seen as the summit of human achievement. Because he was a writer they agreed to talk to him, otherwise their fame excluded them from everyday contacts. Thus in the end the badlands have produced a success.

This book, as in all Jonathan Raban's writings, abounds with acute observation allied with ebullient wit. His explanation of the tragic episode of the homesteaders is of exceptional historic value since it is based on his many interviews with their survivors.

Weaving a grand garland of native blooms

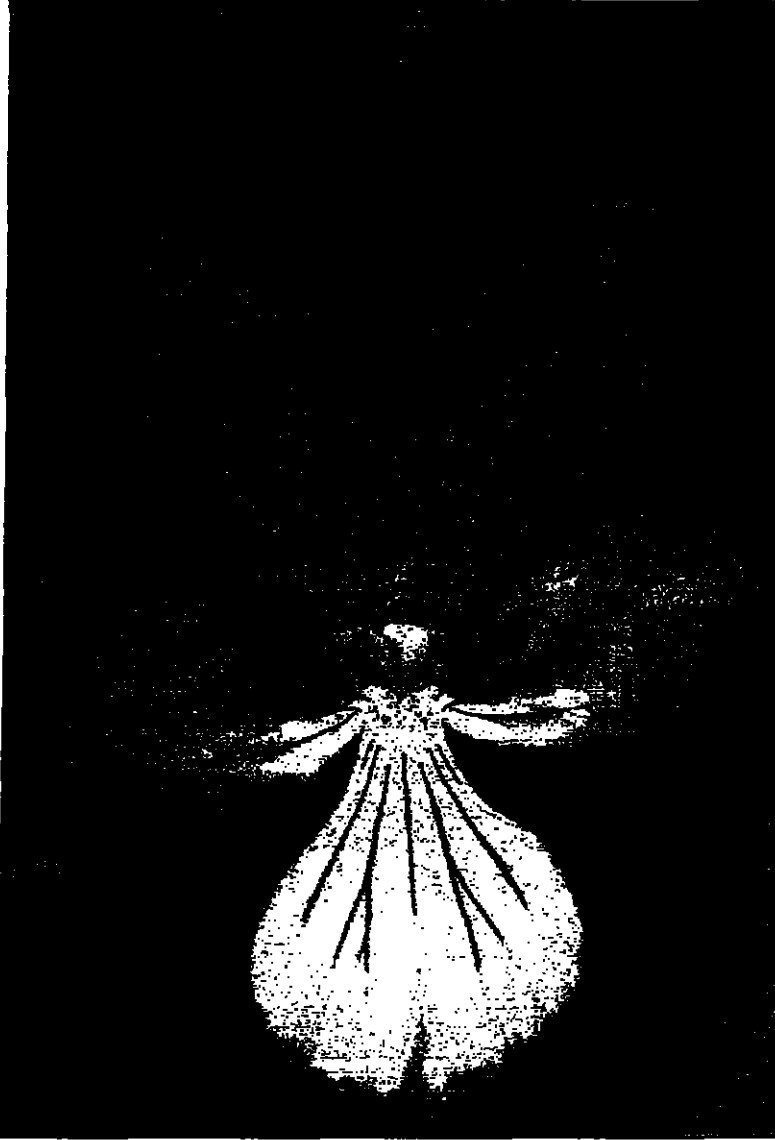
Five years working on one book is a long time, but I am of the opinion that *Flora Britannica* is worth every second of Richard Mabey's time. It is an extraordinary book which has been justifiably described as the "Domesday Book for the plant life of Britain at the end of the 20th century".

The title may give the impression of a starchy, academic thesis, perhaps only of interest to keen amateur or professional botanists. Nothing could be further from the truth. There are nearly 1,000 native or naturalised species described, covering all the higher plant families found in England, Scotland and Wales. Clear and yet interesting descriptions are given and that is where the similarity with a standard flora ends.

Each plant is described in such a way that you are tempted to delve further, even when satisfied that you have found what you need. Most entries contain down-to-earth comments on the plant's characteristics — for example, the deteriorating flower spikes of the early purple orchid are described as having a smell reminiscent of tom cat — And indeed they do.

Pippa Greenwood
FLORA BRITANNICA
By Richard Mabey
Sinclair-Stevenson, £30
ISBN 1 85619 377 2

Mabey has succeeded in drawing together information from ordinary people up and down the country, in rural and inner-city areas. This has then been cleverly used to create a written picture of how we all interact with plants and how they have shaped our everyday lives, our childhoods, local beliefs and traditions, and the stories we tell. Reading it brings back long-forgotten childhood memories such as using an ash tree as a post-box for scribbled poems and letters, and using its guarded base as a "living" doll's house. Then there is the rather more alarming story that the green layer on the surface of a pond, caused by the extensive growth of duckweed (*Lemna minor*) provides the living quarters for the terrifying Jenny Greenteeth. This amorphous monster lurks beneath the surface and sucks in any naughty children who dare to stray too close. Behind all



Britain's flowers in their glory are detailed in a botanical *Domesday Book*: mountain pansies from Perthshire show extremes of colour variation

frightening stories told to children there is a lesson to be learnt and in this case the choice is between an obvious attempt to deter children from risking drowning by playing too close to water and a threat to children who do not clean their teeth. Sometimes I think I had an unusually calm, stress-free childhood!

Reading local variations of stories and beliefs about plants is fascinating and *Flora Britannica* is written in such a way that it is almost impossible to put down. It brings

home, without question, the fact that our lives always have been inextricably linked with our surrounding plant life. It provides much evidence that even in this electronic age, we still continue to weave plants of every type and description into the tapestry of our existence.

Regional variations in plant names are covered with equal enthusiasm: in those entries I checked I was unable to find a single missing common name. In other words we are all too often given a plant's Latin

name, perhaps accompanied by a couple of the more frequently used common names. Here common names have been collected together to provide what I suspect is an unsurpassed collection. I must admit to being unaware that the early purple orchid has such a wide range of aliases including kecklegs, kite's legs, goosey ganders, bloody butchers and kettle legs.

It seems that there are, in fact, more than 90 names listed for this one plant and although not all are included

here, a useful reference is given.

More than 500 photographs are used too, showing useful plant portraits and breathtaking shots of the plants in their natural habitats. These too are of a high standard.

Flora Britannica is quite unlike any other book I have ever had the pleasure to review. Its intention was to be a flora "of the people, for the people" and in this it succeeds 100 per cent. Its botanical and factual content is so charmingly written that it should appeal

to anyone, whether a keen botanist, or just someone who enjoys learning about the plants which surround us. It is a perfect mix of the anecdotal and the factual.

After all this there could only be one pitfall, the price. But no, I was fascinated to see that, with the aim of making it accessible to as wide a range of people as possible, it is to be priced at £30.

Pippa Greenwood is a panellist on Gardeners' Question Time.

Foul Oyster's pearls

Dominic Bradbury
OYSTER
By Janette Turner Hospital
Virago, £14.99
ISBN 1 85196 123 5

THE TURN of the millennium is God's gift to the false prophet. Among the sinister cult svengalis of recent years who have used millenarian anxiety as a tool to prise open impressionable minds stand the disastrous David Koresh, Aum Supreme Truth's Shoko Asahara, and the leaders of the Order of the Solar Temple. Oyster, the enigmatic, charismatic preacher man at the heart of Janette Turner Hospital's ambitious new novel, is a similarly spurious patriarch, spinning an apocalyptic vision of the year 2000 to a remote Australian Outback flock.

Like lost sheep, Oyster's followers come from across the country on a wing and a prayer, lured by the false promise of an idyllic rural escape. What they find is a Waco-style commune, ruled by the egocentric Oyster who engineers a slave labour force to dig the opal seams of his landlocked, godforsaken hole, known as Oyster's Reef. Under in the tunnels of his underground empire he builds a tax-free treasure trove and feeds his own sexual appetites, quietly wiping out dissent.

In this unmapped corner of Queensland, Oyster has found the perfect retreat to realise his dreams. This is an apocalyptic landscape, either basking or freezing: cattle die in the sun and the stench drifts across the lost township of Outer Maroo. It remains unchanged because everyone likes it that way: the opal miners working without government restrictions or taxes; the landowners working deals on opals and arms; the congregation of the town's church of the Living Word, fundamentalists themselves. Here strangers are treated harshly, and those that ask too many questions inevitably meet with "accidents".

FOCUSING much of her story on a sympathetic teenage protagonist, Mercy, and using the arrival of two strangers in search of their children — lost to the cult — as a narrative catalyst, Turner Hospital takes us into a man-made apocalypse every bit as bleak as Waco. Filtered through a largely mute and peripheral narrator, she carefully weaves fundamentalism with murder, opals and dreams, fused in a fragmented, dislocated time-frame that mirrors the desecrated, shifting nature of the Outback landscape. ("The shimmering Outback air can present on the track ahead a man who passed behind you 2 days ago.")

Turner Hospital conveys the idea that the hot desolation of the land almost makes rationalism impossible. Blending dream sequences, Alice in Wonderland imagery and biblical allusions, counterpointed with more precise passages devoted to opal, oysters and pearl, it is a lyrical and sophisticated way of storytelling. Much of the power and originality of the novel stems from the mesmerising disconcerting quality of the writing and Janette Turner Hospital's ability to create a unique pictorial sense of place. That the results are so readable, as well as timely, is testament to her talent.

Caught in an awkward embrace

Nicholas Henderson
FIGHTING WITH ALLIES
America and Britain in Peace and War
By Robin Renwick
Macmillan, £25
ISBN 0 333 65743 8



A very special relationship: Ronald Reagan, Lucky and Margaret Thatcher in 1985

Kennedy, complained to Harold Macmillan about the way the press treated his wife and asked him how he would react if someone said "Lady Dorothy is a drunk". Macmillan responded: "I would reply, 'You should have seen her mother'."

Renwick is explicit about the profound shift in the balance between the two sides in modern times. Inevitable in the long run, it has been accelerated by the participation of both countries in the two World Wars, which has led to superpower leadership for the United States and dramatic decline for Britain. This material change has been compounded by political folly, of which Renwick cites Eden's handling of the Suez crisis as the supreme example. Eden "disturbed the USA but felt no attachment to Europe". The ending of the Cold War and German reunification have also reduced the relative importance of London to Washington.

But what is so significant about the relationship between the United States and

Britain is the fact, emphasised by Renwick, that, notwithstanding this growing disparity and despite recurring political disagreements (reflected in the double entendre of the title), they continue to mean a great deal to each other, and in a manner that is different from the way either country feels about another.

Renwick attributes this to the hard-headed give and take of the system, at any rate in the present age. He gives examples: the 1940 destroyers for bases deal and the transfer, in

the same year, to the United States of British scientific information ("the most valuable cargo ever brought to the shores of the USA", according to the recipients), in return for American war supplies; and Margaret Thatcher's backing of the United States over the deployment of missiles in Europe and over the bombing of Libya, in recognition of the United States' support in the Falklands War. In Renwick's view that war put the relationship to "its most severe test since Suez".

During the last half-century the greatest disagreements have occurred, as Renwick shows, over policy towards the Soviet Union. President Roosevelt, Harry Hopkins (his main foreign policy adviser) and even General Eisenhower harboured illusions about Russia, particularly Stalin, and believed that they could co-operate with Moscow satisfactorily during and immediately after the war, provided the British didn't get in the way. In retrospect it must not be forgotten how appallingly

heavy were the casualties that the Red Army had to bear. Nevertheless, it is extraordinary to read now that at the first three-power wartime summit in Tehran Roosevelt stayed in the Soviet Embassy. The Americans were reluctant to make common cause with the British in trying to prevent Soviet dominance of Central and Eastern Europe. "It would be a terrible mistake," Roosevelt said, "if Uncle Joe thought we had ganged up on him."

Churchill objected to the American notion that for them, dealing with Britain and the Soviet Union was "six of one and half a dozen of the other". Commenting on Churchill's 1946 Fulton speech, Byrnes, the United States Secretary of State, declared that the nation was no more interested in an alliance with Britain against the Soviet Union than in an alliance with the Soviet Union against Britain.

The British decision not to participate fully in the economic integration of Europe is judged by Renwick as "a far more fatal error than Suez". It was based on the conviction that it was necessary to "choose" between Europe and the United States, which he dismisses as "one of the great fallacies of postwar British diplomacy".

Renwick formulates the paradox that Britain cannot afford to be marginalised in Europe if it is to remain influential in Washington; yet it is precisely Britain's differ-

ence from other European countries and its willingness to act without waiting for a European consensus that renders the relationship valuable to the United States. This may be going too far. The more "different" the British are in this respect and the more they appear to be an American Trojan horse in the EU, the less will their influence be in Europe and the less therefore their impact in Washington.

Nor does the essential role that Renwick assigns to Britain of "helping to bind together Europe and the United States" correspond to the requirements of either. We are important to both but not as a transatlantic go-between or bridge. As regards our value to the United States, "the plain fact is", as the current United States Ambassador to London, Admiral Crowe, has said, "that our policies, concerns, interests and common values coincide with Great Britain's to a degree that is in many ways unique".

In a material sense the uniqueness today remains only in certain areas, particularly nuclear defence and intelligence, but Renwick concludes that Britain renders a political service in ensuring that the United States is not left alone when crises occur that affect the West generally, as in Korea or the Gulf, and when the British will continue to be regarded "as the closest and most dependable of America's allies".

Sir Nicholas Henderson was Ambassador to Washington, 1979-82.

HOTELS

■ THE Sheraton this week opened a business centre at its hotel at Paris Charles de Gaulle airport, Terminal 2.

A sailing and windsurfing package in Greece is on sale from Sunworld Sailing for £459 a person

FERRIES

■ **SCANDINAVIAN** Seaways is selling two-night minicruises on ferries from Harwich. The £59 trips will include breakfasts and a sight-seeing trip. Departures from Esbjerg and Hamburg will take place next Tuesday and from Gothenburg on Friday, October 11. Details: 0990 333111.

FLIGHTS

■ **SPANISH** airline Iberia has launched a thrice-weekly service between Gatwick, Zaragoza, Oviedo and La Coruña. Fares start at £165 return. Details: 0171-830 0011

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Britain is swinging again for young tourists

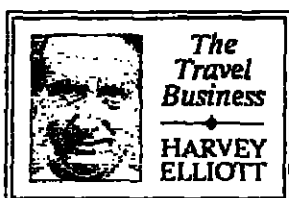
Ask any foreign tourist what images of Britain persuaded them to visit us and I guarantee they won't mention Echobelly. That, at least, would be the assumption of anyone over the age of 25.

The Government-backed British Tourist Authority, however, is convinced that it is the young who must be wooed. And, of course, it is the young who know all about such musicians, whose music - Britpop - has become the hottest since the Beatles.

The BTA has even produced a

magazine for young travellers, UK: The Guide, which is given away at its offices worldwide. To judge by the magazine's success, perhaps Britain's attraction now really does lie in its music, its fashion and its style.

"Why is Britain so great?" says the magazine. "Because it has attitude: a positive, tolerant, multicultural mindset which is above all creative and dynamic... See the



clubs, the football, the street markets, the festivals..."

The campaign is working. Already, about 45 per cent of all French tourists are aged under 25 and the authority is determined to increase the percentage of young people coming from Japan and the United States.

The first batch of 600 copies of the magazine were snapped up within three hours of its launch in Singapore

and the BTA has had to order a reprint after running out of the 250,000 copies issued to its offices worldwide.

Anthony Sell, chief executive of the BTA, says: "Britain is enjoying a cultural renaissance... Our appeal has many forms, from Britpop and the club scene to symphony orchestras with world-class soloists."

"Our cities attract shoppers from all over the world for the latest fashions, from designer labels to street styles. Drawn by such diverse attractions, more visitors are decid-

ing that Britain is the place."

Worldwide, 80 million trips a year are taken by 18 to 24-year-olds, who spend £17 billion a year. If the images of Blur, Oasis and the London club scene can persuade more of them to visit Britain, the growth in tourism here could, the BTA believes, be further stimulated.

Each visitor to Britain spends an average of £500, so every paneload of tourists brings with them the equivalent of seven extra jobs. As Oasis would say: "You've got to roll with it."

Disney boosts its world-beating Orlando park

By DAVID CHURCHILL

HUGE expansion plans to reinforce Walt Disney World at Orlando, Florida, as the world's leading tourist destination were unveiled this week by Michael Eisner, Disney's chairman, during the 25th anniversary celebrations of the theme park's opening.

Mr Eisner and Hillary Clinton, along with other invited guests, including the late Walt Disney's nephew, Roy Disney, took part in a rededication ceremony this week at the Magic Kingdom theme park, which opened on October 1, 1971.

After an inauspicious start, when fewer people than expected turned up because of fears of overcrowding, the resort has made Orlando one of America's fastest-growing cities and the world leader in hotel rooms. From 4,000 hotel rooms in 1971, Orlando now has more than 85,000, surpassing New York and Los Angeles.

Disney World now attracts more than 30 million visitors a year and Orlando is this year expected, for the first time, to play host to more than a million Britons, part of the record 1.4 million tourists from the UK who are likely to visit Florida this year. Since it opened in 1971, more than 500 million people have visited Disney World.

But to keep tourists coming, Disney is planning to expand the 30,000-acre resort, of which only about a quarter is already developed. The biggest new attraction will be a new theme park called Animal Kingdom, due to open in early 1998 on 500 acres, making it about five times the size of the Magic Kingdom (the one with the Cinderella Castle in the middle). The other two big theme parks already open are Epcot and the Disney/MGM Studios.

Also opening over the next year is a new 2,000-room hotel called Coronado Springs, along with 95,000 sq ft of convention space, and a sports complex with facilities for more than 25 leading sports. The Atlanta Braves, America's baseball champions, are basing their pre-season training at the complex next year.

Coming up as well over the next 12 months is expansion of the resort's restaurant and night-time activities, including two new celebrity night-clubs, one of them owned by Gloria Estefan, a 1,500-seat performing arts theatre, a 24-screen movie complex and two new Disney superstores.



Goofy in the Magic Kingdom's Cinderella Castle

Boardwalk, themed on the lines of a turn-of-the-century amusement park. For children, there is a new attraction called Mickey's Toontown Fair, which enables them, via a new rollercoaster, to meet Disney characters.

For the length of the Silver Jubilee celebrations, which last until the end of 1997, the 185ft-high Cinderella Castle is being decked out with 25 candles. Previous visitors to Disney World are also being asked to register, via Disney Stores, as "honoured guests", which will entitle them to a free lithograph when they next visit the resort.

Britain's trendsetters prefer summer in Turkey or Florida, skiing in Italy and Christmas in the Caribbean

Greek islands lose their charm for Britons

By STEVE KEENAN

THE GREEK Islands and Cyprus were the big losers as one million fewer Britons took a holiday abroad this summer. Both saw numbers fall by a quarter, while most other mainstream Mediterranean destinations also reported smaller decreases.

The exceptions were Turkey and Italy. Turkey increased by 12 per cent to more than 650,000 holidaymakers, making it the third most popular destination behind Spain and Greece. And Italy benefited from good exchange rates to boost British visitors to 330,000 for bookings to the end of August.

Two surveys this week from travel agents Lunn Poly and Thomas Cook confirm that cuts by tour operators reduced the number of package holidays sold, from 9.3 million last year to 8.4 million this year.

Lunn Poly said the lack of late holidays available also meant prices were 10 per cent higher than last year. Peter Povey, marketing director of Lunn Poly, which has the same number of holidays available for 1997, said: "There is no guarantee prices will come down at the last minute, so we advise people to book now."

Tour operators have brought out their 1997 brochures earlier than last year to take advantage of pent-up

demand, with the result that near one million holidays have already been sold, compared with 106,000 at the same time last year. After adjusting the figures, Thomas Cook estimates sales are 14 per cent up year on year.

The biggest success of this summer was Florida, up by 28 per cent to more than 380,000 visitors. The appeal of the United States and the Caribbean saw the share of long-haul holidays increase to 13 per cent by the end of August compared with 10 per cent at the same stage in 1995.

All-inclusive holidays in the Caribbean combined with extra charter flights saw the Dominican Republic emerge as the most popular island in the West Indies, followed by Jamaica and Barbados.

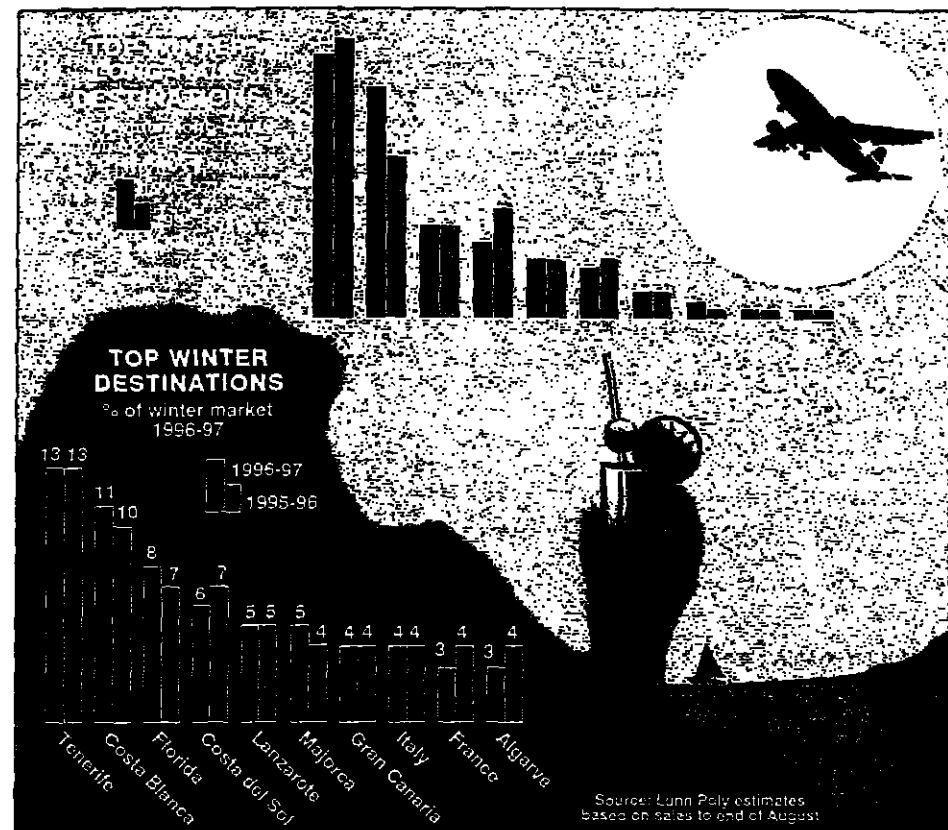
Spain continued to account

for four out of ten holidays sold, with Mallorca alone welcoming nearly one million British holidaymakers. But numbers still fell to the Balearic Islands by 12 per cent, to mainland Spain by 7 per cent and the Canary Islands by 14 per cent, according to Thomas Cook.

For winter 1996-97, Lunn Poly predicts that 3.3 million Britons will take a holiday - the same number as last year - but they are booking earlier: sales have been boosted by earlier brochure launches, increasing numbers so far to 973,000 - up 28 per cent on last year.

The Caribbean (up by 95 per cent) and Florida (up by 49 per cent) again lead the way, but the biggest winter market is still the Canary Islands, with sales to the end of August of 212,000 packages - nearly a quarter of the total.

In the ski market, Lunn Poly said Italy had now overtaken France and Austria as the main destination for Britons. More than a quarter of all ski bookings through travel agents by the end of August were for Italy. Andorra, Canada, the US and Bulgaria have also seen bookings rise, mainly as a result of currency exchange making them more competitive than traditional ski resorts.



BRITAIN'S biggest tour operator, Thomson, this week expanded its long-haul brochure to cash in on growing demand for exotic holidays, Steve Keenan writes.

More than 1.5 million Britons will travel long-haul this year, the company estimates, resulting in more Caribbean capacity being added with charters from Manchester and Gatwick to the Bahamas.

The Faraway Shores brochure - operating year-round from this month - adds flights from ten more UK airports to the Dominican Republic in addition to Gatwick, Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow. Thomson managing director Charles Newbold said: "Long-haul holidays are the

most buoyant sector of the travel market with numbers growing at 15 per cent each year."

Thomson has also moved to meet more demand for cruising, another growth area, with packages aboard NCL and Celebrity Cruises sailing from the Dominican Republic and Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines in the Bahamas.

Three or four-night cruises from the Bahamas are available. A fortnight self-catering on the islands start at £719 and a cruise-and-stay holiday from £945. NCL's ship, the Seaward, has two seven-night cruises from £699 which can be combined with a week in an all-inclusive hotel on the island. The Dominican Re-

public boasts a third of long-haul all-inclusive properties.

Thomson is aiming to attract many of the 20,000 passengers whose cruises aboard the Cunard Countess was abruptly cancelled when the company sold the ship last month.

It claims to have cut prices substantially while covering virtually the same Caribbean itinerary. A seven-day cruise next May costs £699 compared with £1,340 on the Countess.

The withdrawal of the Countess has also led to a surge in bookings for rival P&O Cruises, which said last week that demand had tripled. P&O has a 12-night cruise on its Crown Princess for £1,295.

French airline stops flying

HUNDREDS of passengers are likely to lose their tickets to southern France after a French regional airline ceased flying yesterday, Steven Keenan writes. The independently owned Air Liberté pulled out of its two daily routes, from Gatwick to Bordeaux and Toulouse, after struggling to contain losses. The withdrawal comes after Air France's decision last week to scrap its UK route to Bordeaux from October 28 and hand its Toulouse route to a franchise partner airline.

Under UK law, air passengers are not protected unless the ticket was part of a holiday package booked through a protected travel agent or tour operator. Otherwise, passengers who booked a "seat-only" flight can claim compensation only if they paid by credit card.

Geoffrey Ede, managing director, said: "At the end of the day, the choice is fast over the Channel or fast under. The ferries have still not got the plot right." He ruled the company out of any merger, dismissing conventional ferries as "dinosaurs".

He added: "We have managed pricing, the mix and the

Hoverspeed plans a high-speed boost

By STEVE KEENAN

HOVERSPEED is planning to double its fast-craft fleet based at Dover in a direct challenge to Eurotunnel next summer. The company may add two SeaCats to its existing hovercraft and introduce first-class cabins in an aggressive attempt to boost passenger numbers.

Hoverspeed has bucked trends this year, holding on to a 10 per cent share of the cross-Channel market. Now it aims to take share away from the car-carrying Le Shuttle service

by offering up to 24 departures a day on the Dover-Calais route next summer, cutting crossing times to 35 minutes, the same as Le Shuttle.

Geoffrey Ede, managing director, said: "At the end of the day, the choice is fast over the Channel or fast under. The ferries have still not got the plot right." He ruled the company out of any merger, dismissing conventional ferries as "dinosaurs".

He added: "We have managed pricing, the mix and the

yield. Now it is time to start moving again by expansion."

The expanded fleet will enable 24 sailings a day out of Dover for Hoverspeed.

Within the next two months, Hoverspeed will finalise its plans for next summer and is awaiting approvals by P&O and Stena on possible co-operation. But Mr Ede said: "We may just go ahead and do it anyway."

The company wants to put prices up next year and is also introducing a new first-class cabin to replace its Blue Rib and club. Customers will have to pay full fare to gain access.

Only 10 per cent of travellers paid full fare this summer, compared with 20 per cent in previous years. But Mr Ede said: "I think fares have levelled out. We have made decent profits for three years because we took an intelligent approach to the problem."

PINKERTON'S EYE



A monthly travel guide from the detection agency.

LOW RISK
Last month 2,000 troops were deployed in the streets of eight cities in Honduras to fight mounting crime. In Tanzania recently, vehicles carrying foreign nationals were waylaid and robbed.

MODERATE RISK
A German tourist has been stabbed to death during a robbery while sightseeing in the Pretoria area of South Africa. Carjackings in Greater Johannesburg have declined, but firearms were used in 94 per cent of the incidents which did occur.

HIGH RISK

Several tourist spots in Israel, including Jerusalem and Bethlehem, have been affected by fierce fighting between Palestinian and Israeli security forces. Pakistan also remains high risk. Afghans are suspected of being part of a terrorist ring planning to disrupt the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (Apec) summit in the Philippines in November.

TENSION DATES

On October 4, 1989, German unification occurred. Violent rallies are possible on the anniversary. Chile's Lautaro Youth Movement can be expected to mark the anniversary of its founding on October 5, 1987, with bombings.

Anwar Sadat of Egypt was assassinated on October 6, 1981, and opponents of the peace process could carry out attacks. October 6 is also the anniversary of the beginning of the 1967 Six Day War. October 7 marks the founding of Peru's Communist Party and also the sentencing to life imprisonment of the Shining Path leader Abimael Guzman Reynoso.

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Tourism falls victim to Ulster violence

By DAVID CHURCHILL

NORTHERN Ireland tourism officials are bracing themselves for a 25 per cent fall in tourists this year since the renewal of violence.

The sharp fall in tourist numbers will come as a disappointment, but officials say privately that such a slump had been expected. However, they say, visits to Northern Ireland this year would still be about a quarter higher than the 1994 pre-ceasefire figures.

The numbers, including business travellers, as well as tourists, are expected to have fallen by 11 per cent on 1995, but will be 7 per cent higher than in 1994. Spending by visitors is also estimated at 6 per cent down on last year, but 10 per cent up on 1994.

Evidence of continuing support for Northern Ireland, in spite of the ending of the ceasefire, came yesterday from the NI Conference Bureau. Michael McCormick, its manager, said: "Despite the difficulties... we've recorded a 25 per cent increase in inquiries from May to August over the same period last year."

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Hotels install video links

SIX British hotels have installed the first video conferencing network in the country. The hotels in the Millennium and Copthorne group are hoping to save business travel costs, while boosting use of their meeting rooms. But the

option does not come cheap. A one-hour face-to-face meeting on screen between, say, colleagues in central London and Glasgow will cost £420 - compared with a fully flexible British Airways return of £240.

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FOOTBALL

Clubs win struggle to postpone matches

By Russell Kempson

PERSISTENT lobbying of the Football League finally paid off yesterday when Nationwide League clubs were given the go-ahead to postpone matches if they have three or more players at senior and under-21 level on international duty. Charlton Athletic and Ipswich Town responded immediately by calling off their first division matches against Barnsley and Swindon Town respectively, this weekend.

Previously, the rule covered only players involved in senior internationals. It meant that clubs with promising under-21 players, who were absent because of selection by their countries, had to field weakened teams for league matches. Many managers argued that it was ridiculous to differentiate between senior and under-21 players.

Though the vote was only narrowly in favour of extending the rule to include under-21s, Curbishley feels that the move, ultimately, should help every club.

"I gather there was a bit of opposition, but it could be their turn next," he said. "It's not as if we're talking about once a year, it's four or five times. There's also the question of denying our supporters the chance to see our best players. Having to postpone our game only three days before it was due to be played is not the best state of affairs, either, but at least the problem has been addressed."

George Burley, the Ipswich manager, also welcomed the move. For the game against Swindon, he would have lost James Scowcroft and Tony Vaughan, who are in the England Under-21 squad, and Claus Thomsen, who has been selected for Denmark's World Cup match against Greece next week. "It makes sense," he said. "We haven't got the biggest of squads and to be missing three players was just too many."

Don Goodman, the striker signed from Sunderland for £1 million by Wolverhampton Wanderers, is on the verge of making a comeback to competitive football less than six months after fracturing his skull in a clash of heads while playing against Huddersfield Town at Molinieux on April 27. He has been given clearance to wear a protective headguard in a reserves match against Port Vale tomorrow.

"We were being penalised for being successful," Alan Curbishley, the Charlton manager, said. "Why shouldn't the same consideration be given to the under-21s as it is to senior players? Our under-21 players are our first-team players and even if we're missing only one of them, it hurts our side."

Until the new ruling yesterday, Charlton would have had to have played against Barnsley on Saturday without Shaun Newton and Richard Rufus, who have been called up by England Under-21 for their match against Poland, and John Robinson, who will play for Wales in their World Cup qualifying tie against Holland in Cardiff.

After pressure from Curbishley and managers in similar positions, the Football League canvassed the first division clubs on their views.



Le Tissier rides Merson's tackle during yesterday's England training session at Bisham Abbey. Photograph: Ian Stewart. Report, page 48

Walker guides Norwich to top

By Our Sports Staff

NORWICH City spent many a month regretting the departure of Mike Walker from the manager's office at Carrow Road. It was a symptom of other problems at the club and the signal for a steady decline from the heady days of meeting and beating Bayern Munich in the UEFA Cup. Now, however, Walker is back and an encouraging autumn in East Anglia is threatening to develop into a full-blown revival.

On Tuesday, Norwich went to the top of the Nationwide League first division courtesy of a 4-1 thumping of Grimsby Town, a result all the more commendable because it was at Blundell Park, Grimsby, not at home. Darren Eadie scored their opener after just two minutes and though Ashley Fickling equalised four minutes later, Eadie promptly made it 2-1. Andy Johnson made it 3-1 on the half-hour and Keith O'Neill made it four nine minutes from the end. Grimsby may argue that the 42nd-minute dismissal of

Gary Childs for his second booking hardly helped them, but the points were wrapped up long before then.

Barnsley's 1-1 draw at Ipswich Town denied them the chance to lead the division, while Crystal Palace's impressive charge up the table was slowed, if not quite halted, by their 2-2 draw at Portsmouth.

Brentford continue to set the pace in the second division and their 2-1 win at Bristol City extended their lead to five points. Nicky Forster scoring a late winner at Ashton Gate, Carlisle United are the new leaders of the third division after crushing Colchester United at Brunton Park. David Currie, David Reeves and Owen Archdeacon ensuring a 3-0 win. Fulham, who had been top, lost 2-1 at home to Torquay United. Harry Nelson scoring twice.

The youngest manager in the league, Steve Parkin, 30, saw a Scott Eustace goal earn his Mansfield Town side a 1-1 draw at Hull City with six minutes remaining.

Protest over approach to Kanchelskis

EVERTON have protested to Fifa, the world governing body of football, about an alleged illegal approach by Fiorentina to Andrei Kanchelskis, their Russia international winger.

Alan Myers, a spokesman for the Goodison Park club, said yesterday that it had lodged an official complaint with Fifa over an attempt by an agent said to be acting for the Italian Cup-holders to contact Kanchelskis, 27.

Under Fifa rules, clubs and agents can only approach players about transfer deals during the final six months of their contracts. "Andre's got three years left on his official contract and, as far as we're concerned, he'll be seeing them out," Myers said.

Mark McGhee, the Wolverhampton Wanderers manager, is hoping to complete the signing of a midfield player before the match with Reading at Molinieux on Saturday. McGhee recently confirmed an interest in Craig Hignett, the Middlesbrough player valued at £750,000.

Lee angry at being led up false trails

By Peter Ball

MANCHESTER City have once again gone up a blind alley in the search to end the club's problems. Last night Francis Lee, the City chairman, dismissed the latest attempted takeover, led by Mark Guterman, the Chester City chairman, as another false trail.

Although Guterman had cancelled Tuesday evening's press conference, he insisted that the bid was still alive. Lee took leave to doubt it. "I would say a takeover is nearly out of the question," Lee said, "although investment in the club is still a possibility."

With the search for a new manager still proving unsuccessful, Lee claimed that the supposed bids for the club were proving more of a hindrance than a help.

"I'm sick of all these guys wasting my time," he said. "In the past 12 to 18 months, so many people have supposedly been interested in the club, but not one of them has got it off the ground."

"These nonsensical propos-

als take up so much time, and it's not funny any more. I haven't yet negotiated with anyone who is interested in buying. I am not surprised the fans are confused. All I can tell them is that most of it is nonsense."

The supporters' confusion is exacerbated by City's failure to find a manager. Directors at the board meeting on Tuesday were forced to turn to the B list, but the decision of Steve McMahon to sign a new five-year contract at Swindon presumably means that one of the leading names on that list is no longer available.

"I would hope to have a new manager in place before our game with Queens Park Rangers a week on Saturday," Lee said. "Negotiations are progressing."

Good news for City fans yesterday was that Georgi Kinkladze told Lee that he was happy to remain at Maine Road. The club is still waiting to hear if Everton intend to increase their bid for Uwe Rösler, their German striker.

ATHLETICS

Gunnell decides on final season

By David Powell
ATHLETICS CORRESPONDENT

SALLY GUNNELL, whose Olympic despair left her contemplating retirement, is to continue for one more year. Gunnell, Great Britain's former Olympic champion, world champion, and world record-holder in the 400 metres hurdles, is back in light training two months after her Games ended in a wheelchair.

Gunnell began alternate day running before spending five days in Angola visiting land-mine victims on behalf of the Red Cross. She returned yesterday from Angola and went direct to Birmingham for the first board meeting of the British Athletics Association (BAA), an organisation which the British Athletic Federation (BAF) welcomed last weekend into a power-sharing arrangement.

As well as helping to see British athletics resolve its political difficulties, Gunnell is looking ahead to a full indoor season before trying to regain her world title in Athens next summer. Then she will retire to start a family.

After completing a grand slam of Olympic, world, European and Commonwealth titles, Gunnell suffered a foot injury for which she needed surgery.

Having not raced over hurdles for 20 months, she entered the Olympic season determined to re-establish herself, but she pulled up in her Olympic semi-final with a torn Achilles tendon.

Gunnell had said she would be unlikely to continue if further surgery were necessary, but has been told that no operation is necessary. "She has been able to run without pain," Jonathan Marks, her manager, said yesterday. "She remains incredibly positive."

Gunnell was one of 14 international athletes at the BAA meeting, held in the BAF offices. The acrimony of last year, when some athletes boycotted BAF meetings, seemed a thing of the past.

CRICKET

Sri Lanka hunt for new coach

By Our Sports Staff

SRI LANKA, holders of the cricket World Cup, who have lost their coach, Dav Whatmore, to Lancashire, are to advertise "locally and internationally" for a successor, Upali Dharmadasa, the board president, said yesterday.

Although the board had not expected Whatmore to leave "at this stage", Dharmadasa emphasised that there had been no ill feeling between Whatmore and Sri Lanka officials.

The Australia captain, Mark Taylor, looking forward to his side's first Test for eight months, against India in New Delhi next week, said his priority was to get the players "out of one-day mind-set and into playing five-day cricket."

Despite the absence of Shane Warne, Taylor said he was confident Australia were equipped to cope with any sort of pitch India might provide. "We have four players who can bowl spin and if there is a turning pitch I am sure we can apply pressure."

Brian Lara is the first recipient of the £10,000 Ceat international cricketer of the year award, sponsored by an India tyre company. The runner-up was Mark Waugh, of Australia. At the presentation, Lara said his immediate goal was to help the West Indies to do well on their tour of Australia which starts next month.

FIXTURES

FOOTBALL

Kick-off 7.30 unless stated
AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION: League Cup: Arsenal v Luton (2.01)
PONTINS CENTRAL LEAGUE: First division: Port Vale v Walsingham (7.0)
FA YOUTH CUP: First round qualifying: Tottenham v Haringey; Haringey v Ashford (Midland)
SCHOOLS MATCHES: English Schools: Full Film Trophy: Ipswich v Basildon (at Ipswich); Wales: Inter-Association: South-east v Dorchester (at Haringthorpe Stadium, 7.0)

RUGBY LEAGUE

TOUR MATCH: Hull and East Riding v Australian Aborigines (at Boulevard, Hull, 7.30)

OTHER SPORT

EQUESTRIANISM: Horse of the Year Show (at Wembley)
ICE HOCKEY: Superleague: Ayr v Newcastle (8.30)
GOLF: British women's series: Open v Pyle and Kenyon
SPEEDWAY: Premier League: London v Oxford (7.30) Conference League: Shetland v Berwick (7.45)
TENNIS: LTA estate tournament (at Nottingham)

Holland can bounce back from Euro 96

Ruud Gullit believes the once-divided Dutch are ready for a return to better days. Russell Kempson reports



Gullit optimistic

HOLLAND'S bewildering ability to self-destruct before and during leading tournaments is legendary. Many a promising Dutch campaign has been wrecked by internal strife between coach and players or between the players themselves. This time, as Holland prepare for their opening World Cup qualifying group seven match against Wales in Cardiff on Saturday, it will be different.

Ruud Gullit, the Chelsea player-manager, believes the lessons of Euro 96 have been learnt and that Holland will re-emerge a stronger, more harmonious unit. He feels that Guus Hiddink, the Holland coach, has stabilised the ship and is still the best man for an often turbulent job.

"I always felt Guus would do well and I've no reason to change that opinion," Gullit said. "He has cleared

up the difficulties, there is a different attitude now and there are no problems."

"There appeared to be two factions among the players during Euro 96, but those were more problems within the clubs that were brought into the national team. They have been resolved. Nobody thinks negatively any more; it is a fresh start and everyone will go for it."

Gullit, 34, was no stranger to controversy during his international career, which ended two years ago after 65 caps and 16 goals. He frequently fell out with Leo Beenhakker and Dick Advocaat,

Hiddink's predecessors, and walked out on the Dutch squad before the 1994 World Cup finals in the United States.

"Some players felt they had more power than others," Gullit said, recalling past Dutch conflicts. "Some wanted to play one way, some wanted to play another. There was no one to tell them to shut up and do it for the team."

Hiddink replaced Advocaat, but, during Euro 96, he sent home Edgar Davids, the former Ajax midfielder player, now with AC Milan, for making critical comments about his team selection. There were also rumours of racial tension amid the multicultural squad. Gullit senses all is now well, illustrated

by Holland's recent 2-2 draw against Brazil, and that the 4-1 defeat by England during the European championship finals was "just an accident". He said: "There is no long-term damage. If we played England again, I think we would beat them." He predicts a victory against Wales, too, though he conceded that it is often awkward when playing against the "so-called smaller teams".

It was an opinion that did not meet particular favour with Eddie Niedzwiecki, Gullit's reserve-team coach at Stamford Bridge. Niedzwiecki, a former Wales goalkeeper, who won two caps in the 1980s, said: "There is an arrogance about the Dutch team that perhaps we can knock out of them. We might be a small nation, but we have a big heart. We'll get stuck into them and see how they like it."



Hiddink in control

Ireland moves to halt exodus

By David Hands, RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

IN A week when three of Ireland's four provinces have still to hear whether English clubs will release players for Heineken Cup duty later this month, the efforts of the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) to keep more of its players at home will strike a chord with supporters in clubs up and down the country.

The union is considering contracting around 100 players and, in particular, hopes to convince the next generation that it has a future in Ireland. The Irish Schools, possibly the most consistently successful area of representative rugby over the years, went unbeaten on a nine-match tour to Australia during the summer, and every member of that squad has been contacted by the union about his future.

It is possible that hursaries could be made available to those contemplating higher education, but in general, the IRFU would like to paint a

brighter picture than the gloomy prognosis offered after virtually the entire senior squad accepted contracts before this season to play in England. This will hinge on the finance being available not only for player contracts but also to organise new levels of competition.

When the union meets next month, it will consider the introduction of an All-Ireland cup competition, and a cross-border competition involving Scottish and Irish clubs, the latter an experiment tried two years ago at provincial level with no obvious benefits. If such tournaments are to be successfully run, however, the IRFU will look hard at the mistakes made this season, and also the integration with domestic competitions run in the other home unions and France.

Bobby Deacy, the IRFU president, declared roundly

that the aim was "the attraction of Irish players back from England and the retention of talented young players". The union believes such an objective to be realistic, given the effective combination of remuneration, a meaningful fixture list and quality, co-ordinated provincial branch representatives again.

Prosecutors in Scotland yesterday ordered a police inquiry into an incident in the second division match between Kelso and Edinburgh Academicals last Saturday, during which Craig Halliday, the Kelso prop forward, had his jaw broken in two places, apparently by a punch.

coaching. In addition, it is believed that each province will need a professional management team, so as to ensure that best use is made of all contracted players.

"It is fully accepted that clubs at all levels are under financial pressure," Deacy said. "The union has already given a commitment to increasing the current level of assistance for clubs." The IRFU will put forward new funding arrangements before November 17, when it is due to meet club and provincial branch representatives again.

Henry Hurley, the Ireland prop, will miss Moseley's second-division game with Richmond on Saturday because of his wife's recent miscarriage. Hurley was expected to make his debut for Moseley, whom he joined from Old Wesley in the summer. "We've told him to come back when he can think about rugby again," Mark Anscombe, the Moseley director of rugby, said. "This is going to take them a long time to get over and this sort of thing puts rugby into perspective."

ENGLAND'S top four clubs, preparing for their entry into Europe within the next fortnight, are likely to reveal their playing hand with their selections for the Courage Clubs Championship matches on Saturday — the last for the first division clubs until October 30 because of the demands of the Heineken Cup.

"When we get into Europe, then you will see what our best XV is," Richard Best, director of rugby at Harlequins, said last month and Brian Ashton, coach to Bath, concurs. "We will be aiming for more consistency in terms of who plays, week in and week out, rather than playing on a squad basis," he said, though the demands of too many competitions have tested Bath's squad to the limit.

Some of their younger players, and two of their rugby league acquisitions, learnt the hard way in the 10-10 draw with Llanelli at Stradey Park

on Tuesday in the ill-fated Anglo-Welsh tournament. The Welshmen, themselves stricken by representative calls and injuries, played with spirit and forced errors out of Henry Paul, playing at full back, that were the result of lack of familiarity with rugby union laws.

The talented Wigan back chased a ball from an offside position, which allowed Franco Botica, on his debut for Llanelli, a successful kick at goal. Paul also knocked a ball into touch close to his own line. In rugby league he would be permitted to do both but on Tuesday he paid the penalty which is the risk run by any club that chooses to buy in league players.

Bath, at least, are paying the new tournament the compliment of fielding worthwhile XV's though, again, their financial situation allows them depth to their squad which some of the

underfunded Welsh clubs cannot afford. "If you enter a competition, you have a moral obligation to play a strong side," Ashton said.

"It's not only disappointing to hear that clubs can't raise sides in this day and age, it's unprofessional. There are repercussions outside the competition itself: it means that some clubs will not have the hefty programme they might have envisaged and can rest players while others might be playing certain individuals three times in eight days."

Henley, unbeaten in fourth-division south this season, have raised the prize-money for their Glenyric sevens tournament in May to £25,000. The sponsoring company has agreed a further five-year term and is aiming for it to become one of the biggest tournaments on the world circuit last season all but one of the English first division clubs entered teams.

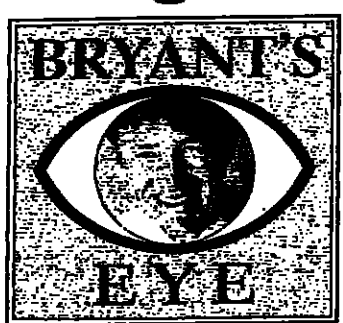
Sportsmen feel lure of running for office

In America they call them the "political jocks". They are former sportsmen, mostly household names and childhood heroes, who, instead of buying a pub or a sports shop as a retirement career option, opt to go into the world of politics.

There, in the wake of the nomination of Jack Kemp, the former American footballer, as the Republican vice-presidential candidate, they reckon that the political arena is increasingly becoming a natural playing field for sports figures.

The latest to line up for this particular race is Jim Ryan, three times an Olympian and former world mile record-holder. Ryan first made the US Olympic team in 1964 while he was still at high school and still holds the high school record for the mile at 3min 55.3sec. These days he is pounding the campaign trail in Kansas, where he is running for a congressional seat as a Republican.

He is being helped in his vote-chasing by Steve Largent, a former American footballer with the Seattle Seahawks, who is now a congressman for Oklahoma. Although they are political upstarts, they both enjoy the kind of instant recognition that most politicians spend years cultivating.



ing, and pundits reckon that they have a great political future.

But they should beware. The obvious British counterpart of the great Jim Ryan is our own Seb Coe, double Olympic champion and Conservative MP for Falmouth and Camborne — and he appears to be suffering in the Commons in a way that he rarely did on the track.

In a survey of MPs published by *The Sunday Times*, a tenth of all the members questioned voted Coe one of the least impressive MPs of the 1992 Westminster intake. In Britain, it seems, we don't give our former sportsmen an easy time when they enter the political arena.

There is an uncomfortable ambivalence about sportsmen and women in British political life. The parties, and particularly their leaders, love to identify themselves with sport and the votes that go with it. In his conference speech at Blackpool this week, Tony Blair repeatedly chanted the refrain "Labour's coming home" — echoing the chorus of *Three Lions* and evoking the patriotic excitement of Euro 96. And the best photo of Blair in a staged kickabout with Kevin Keegan.

John Major, who has a genuine love of sport, never misses a chance to be pictured at Lord's or the Oval, chatting to the England cricket team. As a former keen schoolboy cricketer he will even pad up or bowl in the nets to catch the eye of the photographers. When the country does well on the sports field, runs the political wisdom, such leaders can hope for some benefit at the ballot box.

But while they like to tap into sporting success, when it comes to making use of former sportsmen in politics, Britain's parties seem far less sure-footed. Not many sportsmen enter the Westminster stakes and when they do they rarely shine.

There are exceptions, of course. One of the most notable was Christopher Chataway, one of Roger Bannister's pacemakers when he broke the four-minute mile barrier in 1954, and once holder of the world record for 5,000 metres. Chataway went on to become Minister for Industrial Development but, significantly, when he was offered the job of Minister of Sport he turned it down. In the Commons at the moment can also be found the Liberal Democrat foreign affairs and defence spokesman and former Olympic sprinter, Menzies Campbell.

Like Coe, such men strive to carve out parliamentary careers that have nothing to do with their sporting past. They divorce themselves from their athletic persona as if they are afraid of being typecast and not being taken seriously.

It is a pity, for sport in this country is lamentably lacking in heavyweight leadership, and could use the expertise and experience of a squad of sportsmen-politicians. In France the sports minister is Guy Drut. He is a former Olympic champion over 110 metres hurdles, and he is largely credited with the success of the French team in the Atlanta games. In Brazil the minister in charge of sport



Seb Coe, the politician, has been criticised by his fellow MPs

is the footballing legend, Pelé, and it is even said that he has ambitions to be his country's president.

In America the vote-pulling power of sport is so potent that far from playing down their sporting pedigree, the politicians make all they can of it. Jack Kemp constantly reminds the electorate of his 13 seasons as a professional American footballer.

When asked if he was ready to serve with Bob Dole, Kemp replied simply: "Quarterbacks are always ready." And no American president seems able to hold office without the props of golf clubs or jogging shoes.

But when Britain's athletes venture into politics they seem all too reluctant to make any mention of their

sporting past. Perhaps a sense of modesty stops them mentioning their youthful triumphs. If so, they could probably learn a trick from Ryan.

His television commercial shows no wins, no records, but focuses on his most disappointing moment as an athlete. That was in the 1972 Olympics in Munich when another runner's fall forced him to crash to the track. Ryan's last hope of a gold medal was ruined, but he got up, hopelessly last, and finished the race. He reckons that footage will win him his seat, and launch a great political career in a land where they appreciate their sporting-politicians.

JOHN BRYANT



Seb Coe, the runner, enjoyed a glorious career on the track

Clawing our way back after anguish of poor start

James Capstick files his first report as he heads for Rio de Janeiro as a crew member on *Ocean Rover* in the BT Global Challenge

THE day before the start of our round-the-world race, I was to be found at home, walking the dog on the common and trying to think of an easy way to say goodbye to my two boys. Although it is planned for us all to meet again in Wellington just after Christmas, it seemed so final for some reason.

That evening I couldn't put it off any longer and, amid many tears, mine included, I said my goodbyes and my wife Tracy drove me down to Southampton. There, thanks to the generosity of our boat

sponsors on *Ocean Rover*, all the crew members were booked into a posh hotel for the night with their other halves. The drive down was completed in almost total silence, mainly because Tracy was probably too upset and I was afraid of saying the wrong thing. After arriving at the hotel, things eased a bit as we sat at the bar and we even managed a few jokes.

I never thought I would be able to go to sleep when we went to bed, especially as we had orders from our skipper, Paul Bennett, to do so sober. However, as soon as my head touched the pillow, I was away and the next thing I knew my alarm call came through.

I had a lazy shower (it may be the last for a while), dressed in my *Ocean Rover* sailing gear and prepared to say goodbye to Tracy. At the last moment, she decided to come down to the boat with me rather than stay at the hotel.

It was a cold, wet and windy morning which matched my mood because, rather than being excited on the morning of the start, I was depressed for some reason. When we arrived at the quay, there were hundreds of people and lots of cameramen trying to capture farewell scenes. We found a quiet spot and hugged and kissed and said all the things you would expect. We both

had a cry and then I walked out to *Ocean Rover* — my home for the next ten months.

It was very emotional as we slipped our moorings and motored out into Southampton Water. Although putting

on a brave face, I think most of us were a little bit lost in our own thoughts. We had about four hours to wait before the start at 12.05pm. An early lunch was prepared and the time flew until, together with the other 13 Challenge yachts, we were jockeying for position around the start line, watched by a large spectator fleet. It was a good turnout considering



Capstick takes his turn at the helm of *Ocean Rover*

ing it was blowing about a Force 8 and was wet and bumpy.

As we moved in for our start, we had a minor problem with our staystail and I had my head down grinding a winch when someone on board said that we had crossed the line. For me, it was a bit of an anticlimax as I had missed seeing the gun go off.

We had a poor start, but over the next 24 hours clawed our way back to the front third of the fleet. During this period watches were dictated by who was seasick and who was not. With about a third of us suffering, it was hard work for those who could stand a watch. But, by the second day, people had started to recover and life began to improve.

We had a brilliant second night with a 12-hour spinner run and the day dawned bright with dolphins playing on the bow wave. Lovely stuff. We are slowly getting into a routine and the promise of sunshine and blue seas in the next couple of days beckons.

Letters, page 21



Peace, love, flowers.



Beer.



Bass BEST SELLING PREMIUM CASK ALE SINCE 1777

Curry feast follows exciting duel in sun

By EDWARD GORMAN, SAILING CORRESPONDENT

THE BT Global Challenge fleet was passing Cape Finisterre on the northwest tip of Spain last night in a relatively tight bunch spread over 38 miles with Chris Tibbs, on *Concert*, in the lead, closely followed by Simon Walker, on *Toshiba*, and Mike Golding on *Group 4*.

During a squally night on Tuesday when crews on all 14 yachts were up and down doing regular sail changes, positions in the heart of the fleet were changing constantly with *3Com*, *Ocean Rover* and *Commercial Union* in the thick of it.

With the wind easing and plenty of sun yesterday, the crews were beginning to dry out as the average boat speed for the fleet dropped to 8.6 knots. The yachts are now on their way towards the Berenga Lighthouse, their second waypoint, about 220 miles south of Finisterre. They will leave Berenga to starboard before heading down towards Brazil with northeasterlies likely to hold sway for some time.

One of the best dogfights in the fleet came on Tuesday between the defending champion, *Nuclear Electric*, and *Group 4*. As the crew on

Group 4 reported yesterday: "A great day's sailing on Tuesday — in the sun — match racing with *Nuclear Electric*. A nail-biting afternoon ended triumphantly at 1739 hours when we moved ahead, approximately one mile west of them. We had a celebratory supper of vegetable curry and peach Angel Delight."

Most crew members have now overcome seasickness, though *Courtaulds* reported three people still "severely sick" yesterday. In common with several others, *Courtaulds* is experiencing problems with life jackets self-inflating.

On *Time & Tide*, the disabled crew had their first casualty when Nigel Smith, an amputee, broke his wooden leg. James Hatfield, the skipper, reported that the damage was repaired using flex and duct tape.

Health Insured II is reporting the most damage with problems continuing with the rigging screw on the starboard aft lower shroud, plus problems with both heads (lavatories), the generator and the electric bilge pump.

Positions, page 44

WORD-WATCHING

Answers from page 42

IMAGEN

(a) Daughter of Cymbeline, a woman so pure that virtue shines from her like a light, and who is therefore doomed (in the way of Shakespeare's innocent heroines) to be misunderstood and misunderstood by everyone she meets. Cymbeline is a hotbed of theses that Shakespeare developed better simply later: the grumpy old king, the wicked stepmother, the wicked Italian Iachimo (Iago), girls in drag and supposed poison that turns out to be a harmless sleeping draught.

THAISSA

(c) In *Pericles*, she is the daughter of Simonides, the Princess of Pentapolis, whom Pericles woos and wins. Later, thought to be dead in a storm, she is rescued and brought back to life by Cerimon. 15 years after that, as a dignified priestess of Diana's temple at Ephesus, she is reunited with Pericles. Her lines are few and her character is non-existent.

BUTTS

(b) In *Henry VIII*, Sir William Butts is Henry's physician. He alerts the King to the fact that Cranmer is being made to wait in a corridor before the heresy hearing. "Amongst pursuivants / Pages and footboys."

GONZALO

(a) Alonso's old retainer in *The Tempest*. He is unimaginative and questioning one of those salt-of-the-earth courtiers whose trust (in Shakespeare's plays, at least) is in the office of Prince rather than the rogue who fills it. Although in public he appears a colourless bore, and the villains he associates with social every scene from him, he is the only person in the play — not excepting Prospero — to envisage the island as a Utopia for other people's benefit before his own.

SOLUTION TO WINNING CHESS MOVE

1. Rb7+ Kb7 (1... Rb7); 2. Qg8+ Kc7; 3. Qg8+ Kb7 and, after 4. Qg7+, White also picks up a black rook.

Gift ideas for Christmas. Prices include delivery to EU countries (rest of the world add £1 per item) of the items listed. Send SAE for further details. Sterling/FUS dollar cheques only (11 - £1.50).
TIMES CROSSWORDS: Books 10, 11, 12, 13 £4.25 each. The Times Crossword — Book 2 (240 puzzles) £4.25; Books 3, 4, 5 £3.75 each. The Times Two — Books 3, 4 and NEW Book 5 £3.25 each. Also: The Times Quiz Book 1996 (A-Z).
TIMES COMPUTER CROSSWORDS by David Almond — only £10.25 per title inc. VAT (inc 600 crosswords each). For IBM PCs and Acorn RISC OS Computers on 3.5 diskette. See Saturday Weekend section for details.
Send cheques with order payable to Adam Ltd, 51 Manor Lane, London, SE13 3QW. Return delivery (UK). Tel: 0181 852 4575 (24hrs). No credit cards.

RADIO CHOICE

Reckless and trackless

Across the Desert of Death. Radio 4, 7.20pm.

They were brave but, it has to be said, slightly idiotic. What did it add to the sum of human knowledge that they found a pile of 2,000-year-old manure and a vast amount of shattered pottery? The Anglo-Chinese expedition across 700 miles of the Taklamakan Desert in western China in 1933 was a "first" for men, camels and a woman. The camels, at least, were spared the worrying thought that, translated, the Chinese name for the desert was: "You go in — you never come out". Anglo-Chinese relations could easily have been ruptured when the expedition leader booted a Chinese off the camel on which he was taking an unauthorised ride. He was, when all is said and done, a representative of his Government.

Blood of the Ring Finger. Radio 4, 2.00pm.

The events in Jane Cassidy's drama about superstitious hysteria take place in the Mountains of Mourne, in Ulster, during the early days of the 20th century. I would not blame you for thinking that it could just as well be Massachusetts in the late 17th, the place and time of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. As in Miller's play, sparks of animosity in a physically close-knit community are fanned into flames. All it takes is for someone to enunciate the word witchcraft. I had some difficulty sorting out the relationships in *Blood of the Ring Finger*. You might be luckier. Jane Cassidy's use of song to link the unusually short scenes is eerily effective.

Peter Daville

RADIO 1

FM Stereo 6.30am Chris Evans 8.00
Simon Mayo 12.00 Charlie Jordan
2.00pm Nicky Campbell 4.00 Mark
Goodier 7.00 Evening Session, in
Glasgow for Freshers' Week 10.00 Mark
Radcliffe 12.00 Claire Sturgess 4.00
Che Warren

RADIO 2

FM Stereo 6.00am Sarah Kennedy
7.30 Wake Up to Wogan 9.30 Ken Bruce
11.30 Alex Leslie 1.30pm Debbie
Theroux 5.00 Ed Stewart 6.00 John
Dunn 7.00 The News Huddlines 7.30
David Allen 9.00 Paul Jones 9.45
Gospel Train: A new series 10.30 The
Jamsons 12.00am Charles Now 3.00
Steve Madden

RADIO 5 LIVE

6.00am Morning Reports, incl 5.45
Wake Up to Money 6.00 The Breakfast
Programme, incl 5.55 and 7.55 Racing
Preview 8.55 The Magazine, with Brian
Hayes, incl 10.35 News from Europe
12.00 Midday with Mel, incl 12.35pm
Moneycheck 2.05 Racecast on Five, incl
3.45 Entertainment News 4.00 Nation-
wide, incl at 5.45 Entertainment News
7.00 News Extra, incl at 7.20 Sports
Bulletin 7.25 The Midweek to the
Golden Square. The story of the Repu-
bican Revolution using eyewitness ac-
counts of survivors of the so-called
"Golden Squad" 8.05 Inside Edge 9.05
Sportscentre, with Alan Byrd 9.55
America Graffiti 10.00 News Talk 11.00
Night Extra 12.05am After Hours, incl
Early Call 2.05 Up All Night

TALK RADIO

6.00am Early Breakfast 7.00 Paul Ross
8.00 Scott Chisholm 12.00 Anna Rie-
burn 2.00pm Tommy Boyd 4.00
Drivetime, with Peter Dinkley 7.00 Moz
Deal's Sportszone 10.00 James White
1.00am Ian Collins

RADIO 3

6.00am On Air. Presented by
Andrew MacGregor. Includes
Bach (Violin Concerto in E,
BWV1042); Beethoven (String
Quartet in B flat, Op 18 No 6);
Alain, arch Dutilleul (Priere
pour Vous autres Chameles);
Finley-Korosevic (Piano
Concerto in C sharp minor);
Heinichen (Bassus viri);
Lambert (The Rio Grande)
9.00 Morning Cello, with
Carlotta Young, Telenor
(Overture-Suite in C, TWV55
C8); Tcheronin (La Princesse
Lorraine); Mozart (Piano
Concerto in E flat, K595);
Sonata in D minor, Op 109);
Thierri (Complainte de Gilles);
Part, Carus in memoriam
Benjamin Britten (Four
Sea Interludes)
12.00 Composer of the Week:
Steve Reich at 80 includes
clapping music
1.00pm News: Opera Matinee:
The Palace. A drama
inspired by the last days of
Hale Selassie's regime
showing how an age-old
reign of terror gave way to a
new revolutionary one
3.10 Lullaby. Cinq Meditations
Sur l'Apocalypse with Stephen
Farr, organ
3.55 Philharmonie (Gerhard
Schubert). A concert given
last Saturday in the
Hall, London, introduced by
James MacMillan

RADIO 4

5.55am Shipping Forecast (LW
only) 6.00 News Briefing incl
Weather 6.10 Farming Today
6.25 Prayer for the Day 6.30
Today and 7.25, 8.25 Sport
7.45 Thought for the Day
8.40 A Moment's Liberty (4/5)
8.58 Weather
9.00 News 9.05 Face the Facts,
with John Waite (1)
9.20 Common Ground
9.30 News: King Solomon's
Carpenter (P), by Barbara
Vine, adapted by Nick Fisher
10.00 Daily Service (LW)
10.15 On This Day (LW)
10.30 Women's Hour
11.30 From Our Own
Correspondent
12.00 News: You and Yours
12.25pm Questions of Faith.
Chris Kelly hosts the
light-hearted culinary quiz
12.55 Weather
1.00 The World at One. With Nick
Clarke in Blackpool and
James Cox in London
1.40 The Archers (1) 1.55
Shipping Forecast
2.00 News: Blood of the Ring
Finger, See Choice
3.00 News: The Afternoon Shift
4.00 News 4.05 Kaleidoscope.
Paul Allen reviews a new
edition of Lord's Blood
Wedding and talks to Ken
Campbell about his new show
Volo Time
4.45 Short Story: Love and
Death in Languedoc. A
selection of French tales
written and read by
Christopher Hope (4/5)
5.00 PM 5.50 Shipping Forecast
5.55 Weather
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.30 I'm the Queen of Sheba.
Ken Livingstone, MP, shares a
new panel game about fees

and detail. With guests
Jeremy Hardy, Rebecca
Front, Jim Sweeney and Fred
MacAulay
7.00 News 7.05 The Archers
7.20 Across the Desert of Death.
See Choice (1)
8.00 20/20: A View of the
Century. The penultimate
programme in John Tusa's
series offering a personal
perspective on the last 100
years (1)
8.45 The Writer's Day Out. The
series in which writers best
known for creating fiction
become reporters for the day.
This week, the comic novelist
Richard Francis takes up the
challenge
9.00 Does He Take Sugar? The
programme for people with
disabilities. Presented by
Frederick Dore
9.30 Kaleidoscope (1) 9.59
Weather
10.00 The World Tonight. With
Jeremy Harris in London and
Robin Lustig at the Labour
Conference in Blackpool
10.45 Book at Bedtime: The
Great Gatsby. Sam Roberts
reads F Scott Fitzgerald's
classic, abridged by Neville
Teller (9/10)
11.00 Aunt Julia and the
Scriptwriter. The final part of
Mario Vargas Llosa's comic
novel. With Tom Hollander,
Sothian Richmond, John
Sessions and Alex Lowe
11.30 Outrighting, with John Peel (1)
12.00 News and 12.27am approx
Weather
12.30 The Late Book: Niccolò
Machiavelli (4/8) (1) 12.45
Shipping Forecast
1.00 As World Service

FREQUENCY GUIDE. RADIO 1. FM 97.8-99.8. RADIO 2. FM 88.0-
90.2. RADIO 3. FM 90.2-92.4. RADIO 4. FM 82.4-94.8. LW 138; MW
720. RADIO 5 LIVE. MW 693, 908. WORLD SERVICE. MW 848; LW
198 (12.45-5.55am). CLASSIC FM. FM 100-102. VIRGIN RADIO. FM
105.8; MW 1197, 1215. TALK RADIO. MW 1093, 1099. Television
and radio listings compiled by Peter Dear, Ian Hughes, Rosemary
Smith, Susan Thomson, Jane Gregory and John McNamara.

Ross sheds no light on the Poldark story

There are some people, I suppose, who hear the names Ross and Demelza Poldark, and go all funny at the back of the neck. Poldark is certainly a good name, especially when accented (as it often was last night) on the second syllable. Poldark. Ah-ha, me hearties, it brings out the Robert Newton impersonation in all but the strongest-willed. Even those of us ignorant of Winston Graham's novels, who never watched the old BBC series (with Robin Ellis and Angharad Rees), had a certain respect for such a well-named piece. Poldark. It makes you think of tin-mines and lowering coastal scenery, and (as seen on a million book-jackets) rustic Empire-line dresses in coastal settings, furling and snapping like flags in a stiff sea breeze.

But Poldark last night (ITV) was awful. Not only was it slow and dull, but it had no atmosphere, and no proper story. A

slice of plodding saga had been extracted and turned into a film - making a narrative with no beginning and no end, just yards and yards of pointless middle. In the course of two hours, what happened? Ross Poldark (John Bowe with long hair and sideburns) returned from Westminster. Jeremy Poldark (an unavailable girl, while his sister Clowance met two boys. Ho hum. The sea glittered when it got the chance. A neighbouring landowner came a cropper. And a handsome stranger stirred things up a bit, for motives that were not revealed.

The shortfalls weren't just in the story, either. Why was so little money spent on actors? Each cameo appearance cried aloud for a famous telly face ("Is that Robert Hardy?" "Perhaps it's Phoebe Nicholls!"), but it was a cruel tease when the camera brought them nearer, they were invariably people you'd never seen in your life

before. As for the principals, Kelly Kelly made a good impression as Clowance (what a ridiculous name) while Mel Martin was pretty as her mum. But John Bowe, Oh God, what a weekend he was. To be fair, I do suffer from a unique chemical aversion to Bowe's lacklustre performance: he appears on screen and I lose the will to live. How clever those Prime Suspect people were, casting him as Marlowe - that blank, unreadable psychopath. Casting a man with no qualities as Ross Poldark, however, seems not very clever at all.

On a brighter note, BBC's Beck seemed quite promising. Its star, Amanda Redman, has a great charm, on screen, anyway, especially in dewy-eyed repose; and it's not her fault that her lookalike Amanda Burton has become so famous recently, with a similar haircut and a



similar series. How galling: one minute there are no Detective Amandas, and the next minute there are two. All it needs now is for Amanda de Cadenet to get a series as a police marksman with an unlikely name such as "Torrent", and confusion will be complete.

"Beck" is presumably short for Rebecca, but might also be her surname. It makes me think of mountain streams anyway. "Hey, whatever! Let's just call her Beck," her parents may have reasoned at the font: "and then one day she'll be on telly running a missing-persons agency with a snappy one-word title for the show!"

Christening parties queuing behind were naturally impressed by this decision, and decided to copy it. "Hey, whatever!" they agreed. "Let's call our two Murphys and Tallys, and they can be sidekicks - to Beck!" And thus was another set of absurd nicknames foisted on a tolerant public, who said "Hey, whatever, just get on with it!"

Establishing a personality for Beck was easy. She snatched a slice of pizza from someone else's box, ordered her employees about, worked late, neglected a bruised shoulder, wore a black leather skirt and had a lonely bath with candles and champagne. The single career woman, in a nutshell. "What shall we eat?" asked her boyfriend. "Anything with choices."

terol," she quipped. "Men, why do we need them?" groaned Theresa in the office. "Saves on batteries," said Beck, which was a little uncalled for (unless, of course, she was talking about a clock radio).

Such smutty talk aside, the first episode had plenty of plot entailing lost children and lost parents, with Beck by no means a pushover emotionally. Perhaps in future weeks we will learn why the missing-persons business drew her in, when she's not particularly interested in run-arounds and has no obvious detection skills. Meanwhile two plot strands last night both concerned children who had run away - one shocked by her mother's drinking, the other horrified by his father's sexuality. The script was nothing special and the direction relied too heavily on jumpy camerawork (and music) to make things interesting. On the plus side, Amanda

Redman's hair was lovely. The most memorable drama of the evening, perversely, was also the shortest - BBC's 10X10 was a film called *You Drive Me*, written and directed by Stef Penney. It was like a French short story. On a lonely rural road, amid acres of waving, waist-high corn, a hitchhiker (Andrew Tiernan) flagged down a pushover emotionally. Perhaps in future weeks we will learn why the missing-persons business drew her in, when she's not particularly interested in run-arounds and has no obvious detection skills. Meanwhile two plot strands last night both concerned children who had run away - one shocked by her mother's drinking, the other horrified by his father's sexuality. The script was nothing special and the direction relied too heavily on jumpy camerawork (and music) to make things interesting. On the plus side, Amanda

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6.00am Business Breakfast (25311)
7.00 BBC Breakfast News (CeeFax) (71995)
9.00 Breakfast News Extra (CeeFax) (56580)

9.30 Style Challenge (s) (2708715) 9.45 Kibitz (s) (2538795) 10.30 Can't Cook, Won't Cook (s) (17116)

11.00 News, Regional News and weather (CeeFax) (611215)
11.05 Conference Live. Live coverage of the Labour Party conference (s) (8365222)

1.00 News and weather (CeeFax) (74086)
1.30 Regional News and weather (57664319)
1.40 Neighbours (CeeFax) (s) (4461424)

2.00 Call My Bluff (s) (6447661) 2.35 Turnabout (s) (6600002) 3.00 The Terrace (s) (3796)

3.30 Little Bear (s) (7658932) 3.55 The Chipmunks (s) (9052852) 4.20 Julia Jekyll and Harriet Hyde (CeeFax) (s) (8028067) 4.35 Smart (CeeFax) (s) (1089529) 5.00 Newsweek (CeeFax) (2608715) 5.10 Sykes Grove (CeeFax) (s) (6704319)

5.35 Neighbours (s) (CeeFax) (s) (227864)
6.00 News and weather (CeeFax) (64)
6.30 Regional news (16)
7.00 Watchdog (CeeFax) (s) (5777)

7.30 EastEnders. Cindy makes a decision she could regret. (CeeFax) (s) (28)
8.00 Animal Hospital. Roll Harris sees the RSPCA's trainee inspectors get lessons from the fire brigade (CeeFax) (s) (4425)

8.30 The Hello Girls. Baslow 212. Telephone-exchange comedy set in 1959. The supervisors discover that the girls have been listening in to the top-secret Baslow line. With Letitia Dean, Amy Marston and Colin Wells (CeeFax) (s) (3832)

9.00 Nine O'Clock News, Regional News and weather (CeeFax) (7970)
9.30 The X-Files: Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose. Clyde Bruckman has a unique gift - he can foresee the deaths of others. Unable to affect the outcome he hides his ability until he stumbles across a serial killer. Mulder and Scully try to enlist Bruckman's help in the search for the killer, but soon become targets themselves. (CeeFax) (s) (680195)

10.15 They Think It's All Over. Nick Hancock compares a game of wit and sporting knowledge "with a difference". Tonight's guests are the Australian comedian and former Neighbours star Mark Little and former England rugby player Brian Moore (CeeFax) (s) (483357)

10.45 Question Time. David Dimbleby chairs this week's debate from Blackpool. The panel comprises the businessman Lesley Knox and MPs William Haig, Gordon Brown and Charles Kennedy (419932)

11.40 FILM: Perfect Witness (1989). A made-for-television movie. A restaurant owner witnesses a gangland murder but is too frightened to testify, despite pressure from the district attorney. With Brian Dennehy, Aidan Quinn and Stockard Channing. Directed by Robert Mandel (CeeFax) (s) (972425)

1.25am-1.30 Weather (2110568)
VideoPlus+ and the Video PlusCodes
The numbers next to each TV programme listing are Video PlusCodes. These allow you to programme your video recorder instantly with a VideoPlus+ handset. Tap in the Video PlusCode for the programme in which you wish to record. VideoPlus+ is a trademark of Genstar Development Ltd.

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6.00am Open University: It's a Lovely Day Tomorrow (773286) 6.25 A Bit of Film About Thelma (775199) 6.50 Developing World (Teletext) (5319796)

7.15 See Hear Breakfast News (657864)
7.30 Alvin and the Chipmunks (446846)
7.55 Blue Peter (805222) 8.20 Noddy (s) (1747628) 8.35 Lassie (s) (8452796) 9.00 The IT Collection (s) (2785533) 9.25 The Art (s) (5233337)

9.45 Writing and Pictures (Teletext) (s) (157603) 10.00 Playdays (s) (23222) 10.30 Storytime (s) (1286800) 10.45 The Experimenter (s) (3484357)

11.05 Space Ark (s) (6193680) 11.15 Welsh History - Famous People (955883)
11.35 Landmarks (Teletext) (s) (313203) 11.55 Christianity in Britain (s) (1119539)

12.15am Hello Aus Berlin (s) (7602800) 12.30 Working Lunch (67603) 1.00 Life School (s) (3273225) 1.25 Mad About Music (s) (17688116) 1.45 Numberline (s) (57674796) 2.00 Noddy (s) (18882777)

2.10 Conference Live (s) (268067)
3.55 News and weather (5655338)
4.00 Today's Day (57) 4.30 Ready, Steady, Cook (41) 5.00 The Oprah Winfrey Show (s) (9584864) 5.40 True Love's Tricks of the Trade (933393)
5.50 Breast of Friends (936951)

6.00 Star Trek: Deep Space Nine (865241)
6.45 Conference Talk (s) (790322)
7.30 The Shoot: An Italian Dream. David Gepp captures the familiar backdrop of romantic Venice (Teletext) (s) (70)

8.00 The Works. The series on the arts and popular culture returns with a profile of Peter Green, formerly of Fleetwood Mac (Teletext) (s) (2067)

8.30 Top Gear. Jeremy Clarkson gives his verdict on Jaguar's new coupe. Tony Mason takes his three-wheeler to the race track for the Reliant Robin Championship. And Steve Barry tries out the Honda Blackbird, a new breed of superbike (Teletext) (s) (1574)

9.00 Neverwhere. Blackbirds. An urban fantasy with Gary Bakewell, Laura Fraser, Hywel Bennett and Peter Capaldi (s) (5512)

9.30 The System: The Spike. Looking at the closure of Glasgow's Bishopbriggs Residential Unit, the last remnant of 250 such Government hostels that offered a meal and a bed to the homeless (Teletext) (s) (744241)

10.20 10 x 10. A director's film debut (970551)
10.30 Newsnight (Teletext) (301593)
11.15 Late Review (s) (916086)
12.00 The Limit (s) (52384)

12.30am-6.00 The Learning Zone

Facing impending closure (9.30pm)

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12.00 The Limit (s) (52384)

12.30am-6.00 The Learning Zone

9.30 The System: The Spike. Looking at the closure of Glasgow's Bishopbriggs Residential Unit, the last remnant of 250 such Government hostels that offered a meal and a bed to the homeless (Teletext) (s) (744241)

10.20 10 x 10. A director's film debut (970551)
10.30 Newsnight (Teletext) (301593)
11.15 Late Review (s) (916086)
12.00 The Limit (s) (52384)

The Works: Peter Green - A Hard Road BBC2, 8.00pm

In the long list of the casualties of rock, Peter Green has a sadly prominent position. But at least he is still with us and after a gap of 30 years, beginning to play again. As a blues guitarist he once ranked with Jimi Hendrix and Eric Clapton and his band, Fleetwood Mac, were more popular than the Beatles. Then he was sucked into the American drug culture, made too many trips with LSD and spent the Seventies and Eighties in and out of mental institutions. The film charts his slow and tentative comeback. He has a new band and a personal manager, Michelle Reynolds, prepared to be patient and understanding. Modest gigs in Yorkshire and Surrey are a long way from the glory years and Green knows that he will never shake off his illness completely. But it is a start and the audience seem pleased to see him.

Dosh Channel 4, 8.00pm

Adam Faith is back with more tips on making money and cutting costs. The slick presentation ensures high entertainment value, which is largely what the show is about, but there is hard information as well. Tonight's weightiest item, in which a 25-year-old first-time buyer shops around for a mortgage, could easily have filled the programme on its own. As it is we get a breathless toing-and-froing between the rival offers of a bank and a building society, with the minimum of explanation. Dosh is more successful when it tackles lighter subjects, such as building up a wardrobe from charity shops or realising the best prices from the contents of an attic. Piers Corbyn, the unorthodox weather forecaster who starred in a BBC documentary this year, has a supporting role this time.

Canterbury Tales Channel 4, 9.00pm

Ian Hislop concludes his shrewd and witty survey of the Church of England by considering its postwar prelates. Being Hislop, he mischievously suggests that the Christian leader with the firmest grip on traditional moral values was not an archbishop but Margaret Thatcher. Lord Rumble, much in the news recently, provides more lively copy as he recalls being on the sharp end of Thatcher's wrath. Hislop offers delicious vignettes of Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher, a traditionalist who attacked commercial television and Premium Bonds, and Michael Ramsey, who looked a hundred but was the same age as Cary Grant. Trendy vice, ever-declining congregations and the current row over homosexual priests are the other main props of a programme which manages at the same time to be both irreverent and sympathetic.

The System: The Spike BBC2, 9.30pm

The series about the welfare state travels to one of its bleakest outposts. Ten miles from Glasgow, a disused military camp has been converted into a hostel for the homeless, run by the Department of Social Security. Officially it is called a resettlement unit. But to the residents it is the spike, the modern version of the Victorian workhouse. These are society's outcasts



EQUESTRIANISM 44

Horse of the Year Show opens in style

SPORT

THURSDAY OCTOBER 3 1996

SAILING 46

James Capstick adjusts to life on the waves



England coach's sobering thoughts

Hoddle plans new national health service

By ROB HUGHES, FOOTBALL CORRESPONDENT

GLENN HODDLE'S new England is taking shape, with distinctive and sober departures from the manner in which Terry Venables achieved the minimum for a nation hosting the European championship, the semi-finals at Wembley a few months ago. When the players return to the stadium next Wednesday, for a World Cup qualifying game against Poland for which 60,000 tickets have already been sold, the spectators can be sure of one thing: whatever their team sweats out that night, it will not contain alcohol.

The England squad gathered at Bisham Abbey yesterday. They will now be clustered in their hotel at Burnham Beeches and let out occasionally to train at Wembley. All else, for the next seven days, will be off-limits. This new way of living excludes everything else for seven days and seven nights: no family visits, no girlfriends, no nightlife. And yet it will be humane. The players can, with permission, and with Hoddle's blessing, get out on the golf course or go fishing on Sunday, so long as they eat, sleep and think football together.

Hoddle was pressed on whether this might not be a recipe for high carbohydrate boredom. "Who knows? There might be some players who get bored with their families," he said.

"This is the way they do it

abroad," Hoddle, who had his halcyon days as a player with Monaco in the South of France, said. "If we're going to go forward and do well at this level, there has to be a certain amount of sacrifice. It cannot be done without commitment. That's what I feel is needed, it is the way I want things done, and the players will have to live with it."

One can hear, from the length and breadth of the country, relief that here, apparently, is a new coach — a man-manager — intent on cleaning up the image of the game; intent, moreover, on ensuring that under his re-

controlled environment. Will they have a drink? Of course. I'm not dealing with schoolkids. I need to treat them like adults. They'll have a few beers over the weekend... if they wish to."

While the coach was setting out his criteria, insisting that although his home is closer than the players' to Bisham Abbey, he will not be going home this weekend, one looked across at Dominic Matteo. The Liverpool centre-back, a possible libero for England's future, is the "baby" of the squad. He arrived with a niggling knee injury that required an injection to quell inflammation after the game at West Ham United on Sunday. He stood, a forlorn figure, on the edge of training yesterday.

His inclusion, though, emphasises that change is about to be tactical as well as temperamental. Matteo, when England were progressing in the European championship, was fifth choice centre back at Anfield. He shakes his head even now, considering the way the Liverpool coaching staff kept him going. "They were telling me to keep at it, telling me that it was about improving my mental attitude rather than anything else. Obviously it was frustrating, because I was so close to Robbie [Fowler]; it wasn't jealousy, but you want to be doing it yourself."

He talked, openly and honestly, of needing to improve facets of his game. "I wouldn't say I am a tackler," he said. Neither did he look comfortable when Slaven Bilic and Marc Rieper were thrown at Liverpool in aerial combat on Sunday. Yet, he is on the brink of England selection.

"Nowadays, at the back, it's important that you've got a good touch, that you can pass the ball, read the game," Matteo said. There lies the key to Hoddle's new road: he wants to build the game up from defence.

The coach enthused at Bisham yesterday over the condition and application of



Under control: Hoddle, left, keeps a close eye on Gascoigne during training at Bisham Abbey yesterday

Paul Gascoigne. "I played him with a little bit of risk in Moldova, because he had an Achilles problem and wasn't 100 per cent," he said. "Look at him, he's now fitter, he looks leaner."

The Manchester United

contingent was not present when the seven-day concentration camp opened yesterday; Hoddle found the time to be flexible, allowing them to clock in this morning because they had a long-standing club commitment at Old Trafford.

But, once installed, they will be asked for the sacrifice, the commitment of the others.

Hoddle points to Brazil. Thank goodness he never heard Joao Saldanha, the maverick coach who built the incomparable Brazil team of

1970. "We make all these rules in our camp," Saldanha said. "but they are rules for the press. I tell you, some of my players are bandits, and if they want to drink or do other things, my number one rule is that the press don't find out."

Brighton likely to escape heavy punishment

By JOHN GOODBODY

BRIGHTON and Hove Albion Football Club could escape having three points deducted despite the three pitch invasions that marked their Nationwide League third division match against Lincoln City at the Goldstone Ground on Tuesday.

As Brighton supporters threatened to demonstrate this weekend at the Lancashire home of Bill Archer, the club chairman, the FA said it would study the reports of the referee and its observer before deciding whether to go ahead with the suspended sentence hanging over the club.

Last April, the Brighton followers, irate at the sale of the Goldstone Ground and the uncertainty surrounding the club's future, invaded the pitch after the home game against York City. The FA imposed a suspended sentence of a three-point deduction and having to play one match behind closed doors.

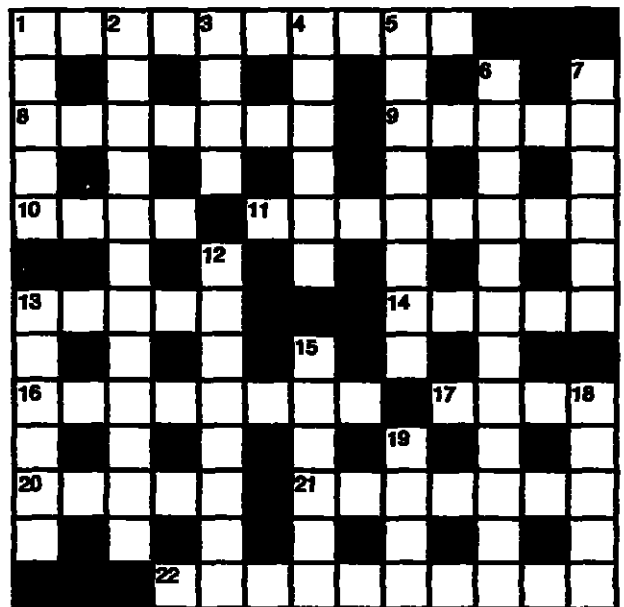
However, Steve Double, the FA spokesman, said yesterday: "At least it was a peaceful protest and that will be taken into account. We are relieved that no one was injured and that there were none of the scenes that surrounded the game with York. Another charge has to be brought for the possibility of a suspended sentence to come into effect."

Ian Hart, an official of the Brighton Independent Supporters' Association, said yesterday that a substantial number of Brighton followers would be distributing leaflets in Archer's home village this weekend. There is deadlock in negotiations between the Brighton board and the consortium, which is attempting to buy the club.

Another club whose future is uncertain is Wimbledon, who are attempting to move to Dublin from their present home at Selhurst Park. An Irish consortium, led by Paul McGuinness, the manager of the rock group U2, and Owen O'Callaghan, the Cork property developer, has agreed sale terms with the Premier League club. Uefa, football's European governing body, said yesterday it was against the move, although the consortium is believed to have taken advice that if Uefa tried to block the proposal, it could be charged with restraint of trade.

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD

No 903 in association with BRITISH MIDLAND



ACROSS

- 1 Casual purchase (7,3)
- 8 Lack of success (7)
- 9 Main force of blow (5)
- 10 List of work turns (4)
- 11 Dishonour (8)
- 13 Terrifying (lit.); very bad (5)
- 14 A duck, its down for warmth (5)
- 16 Sumptuously beautiful (5)
- 17 Sour, sharp (with 4)
- 20 A European; a vegetable (5)
- 21 Celebrate gladly (7)
- 22 (Group) draw together for safety (5,5)

DOWN

- 1 Deduce (5)
- 2 Procedural question (5,2,5)
- 3 Tasteless; deafening (4)
- 4 Vim (6)
- 5 Wild; continuous (8)
- 6 Sphere of (legal) authority (12)
- 7 One suitable for long race (6)
- 12 Spring plant, carpets woods (8)
- 13 A month; imposing (6)
- 15 The pride that causes a fall (6)
- 18 Clothing (5)
- 19 Almost shut (4)

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Post your entry to Times Two Crossword, PO Box 6886, London E2 8SP to arrive by next Monday. The winners' names and solution will appear on Wednesday.

Name/Address

SOLUTION TO NO 902

ACROSS: 1 Go to show 5 Call 8 Error 9 Founder 11 Fey 12 Inmate 13 Low-key 15 Indeed 16 Mont Blanc 19 Cur 20 Subject 21 On ice 22 Sage 23 Personal
DOWN: 1 Gleeful 2 Tardy 3 Serviceable 4 Offend 6 Al dente 7 Force 10 Unconscious 14 Windbag 16 Durrell 17 Castle 18 Moses 19 Cairn

Walkinshaw shows reasons why Hill will have licence to thrill

Oliver Holt takes a look behind the scenes at the hi-tech headquarters of TWR Arrows

THE new guardian of Damon Hill's fate flung open the doors of his state-of-the-art factory yesterday and gave a captivated audience a glimpse of why the driver who could be Formula One motor racing world champion has chosen to join his team next year. It was like a scene from a James Bond movie in there and Tom Walkinshaw, the man with all the answers, was revelling in his role as Dr Yes.

Last week, Hill took the tour, too, past the workshops where men in white coats and masks pore over machinery, through the huge drawing offices where designers crunch numbers into their computers, into the cavernous room that houses the giant autoclave where the chassis are fired. It worked its magic. Before he left, he had agreed to drive for TWR Arrows next season.

His decision shocked the vast majority of observers in the sport who all expected him to plump for either Jordan or Stewart Grand Prix, but they had not seen what Hill had seen. Walkinshaw's brand new centre of high-technology hidden away among Cotswold stone at Leaford, in deepest Oxfordshire, puts even the facilities of Williams and McLaren in the shade.

Arrows is now in name only the same team that has contested 287 grands prix without registering a single victory. Even its name would be different if other team owners did not object to the change to TWR proposed by Walkinshaw when he bought a controlling interest in it earlier this season.

The last remnants of the old team, though, will be cast off when this season ends at the

Japanese Grand Prix at Suzuka a week on Sunday and the future will begin.

That future, Walkinshaw insisted yesterday, will hold podium finishes for Hill next season and possibly even the odd win. With a quiet confidence, the Scot who inspired Benetton's rise and rise with Michael Schumacher, also predicted that TWR Arrows would be fighting "head-to-head" with Williams for the constructors' championship by 2000.

"I think Damon was surprised when he came here last week," Walkinshaw said. "He thought that after Williams, with the options he had available to him, he would be joining a third division outfit."



Walkinshaw at the Oxfordshire factory of the TWR Arrows team yesterday. Photograph: Stuart Harrison

But he saw here the ingredients that he knows he needs if he is ever likely to win a race again. We were reasonably confident that, if we could get him to the factory, he would be won over.

"This Arrows is different to the Arrows of before. We had what we inherited and there was very little we could do about it this season. We decided immediately to focus all our energies on next year's motor car and Damon has had a pretty good insight into what it will be like."

"We have set various goals and they are realistic goals. The first thing is to get Damon on the podium so that he can get a smell of success. We expect to get several podium

finishes and if we can get to the podium, there is no reason why we cannot win one or two grands prix. We want to be in the top five constructors next year, the top three the year after that and challenging for the championship by 2000."

Walkinshaw said he would not ask Hill to start testing for the team until at least a month after the Japanese Grand Prix, a race where he needs one point to secure this year's title from his Williams-Renault team-mate, Jacques Villeneuve, because the Englishman would be either too elated or too downcast to concentrate on the job before then.

But he confirmed that Hill, who has signed a one-year deal worth £4 million, will be involved in a heavy testing programme aimed at integrating the new elements of the team's technical package, mainly Yamaha engines and Bridgestone tyres. Walkinshaw said he expected next season's car to be available for its first test in the second week in January.

"Damon has got to show the world that he can deliver results in a motor car other than a Williams," Walkinshaw said. "I want him to be the catalyst to extract the performance out of everyone in the company, the centre of focus. If everything goes well, we will sit down early and negotiate a long-term deal."

At one stage of the tour, Walkinshaw, 50, pointed out a wooden shed in the grounds of the site, once used by Scott of the Antarctic to prepare for his ill-fated expedition. Anyone who had thought Damon Hill was setting out on some fruitless journey into a wilderness though, was already thinking again.

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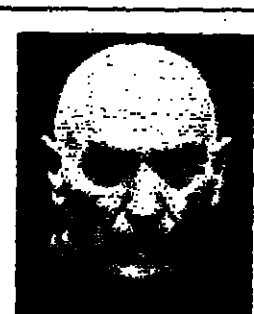
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BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook

FRIDAY OCTOBER 4 1996

Customer benefits delayed as Ofgas makes MMC referral

British Gas rejects price cuts

BY OLIVER AUGUST

GAS consumers will have to wait an extra six months for a proposed average £28 cut in their annual bills, Ofgas, the industry regulator, said yesterday.

The rejection by British Gas of a new price formula for Transco, its pipeline business, has forced Ofgas to refer the pricing issue to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.



British Gas said the new formula would lead to a £400 million drop in annual revenues, preventing efficient levels of investment in the pipeline system and threatening dividend payments to shareholders.

Richard Giordano, the British Gas chairman, said: "We will get a reasoned look at the problem by the MMC. Frankly, we see little prospect that we could do worse. The cuts are so large that we are seriously

concerned as to whether there will be adequate resources to sustain what is really a first-class quality distribution system, the best in the world."

Yesterday's moves follow months of negotiations between Ofgas and British Gas over the pricing formula. In May, Clare Spottiswoode, the Director-General of Gas Supply, published her initial pricing proposals, which included a price cut of 20 per cent in the first year.

The arguments that followed centred around the basis on which the company's costs and assets were to be calculated. In August, Ms Spottiswoode made a few minor concessions which she is now threatening to withdraw.

She said: "Ofgas's proposals would provide substantially lower prices to customers, while ensuring that British Gas could continue to finance its transportation business."



Clare Spottiswoode claims she has been the subject of a smear campaign by British Gas but will not be intimidated

Ms Spottiswoode also accused British Gas of running a campaign to blacken her name, using psychological profiles of her. This campaign had been a waste of time and effort, she said, because it would not influence her decision or the MMC.

"I was told by several sources that British Gas had psychological profiles done of me. If these profiles were accurate they would know that I won't be intimidated by their public campaign against me," she said.

British Gas vehemently denied blackening Ms Spottiswoode's name or commissioning psychological profiles of her. Ms Spottiswoode will officially make the referral to the MMC on Monday. The inquiry is expected to last six months.

The Gas Consumers' Council said it was disappointed by the referral but not surprised. Ian Powe, the director, said: "It will be well into next year before consumers know whether their high hopes of lower gas bills will be met. But too much was at stake for either side to back down."

Markets wary on US jobs figures

BY GEORGE SIVELL

MARKETS slipped back from record levels yesterday in anticipation of American monthly jobs figures due to be published later today.

The jobs figures have caused mayhem on markets several times this year and, after the Fed's decision to hold interest rates, greater nervousness is expected, especially if the economy shows signs of slowing growth.

Yesterday, however, the US Commerce Department reported that new orders to American factories tumbled at the sharpest rate in 3½ years during August.

Orders were down a surprisingly steep 1.9 per cent to a seasonally adjusted \$311.1 billion, the largest monthly decline since a 2.2 per cent decrease in January 1993. Backlogs of unfilled orders weakened and inventories mounted.

The August decline more than erased a 1.7 per cent July orders gain. Separately, the Labour Department reported new applications for jobless

pay were steady last week at 340,000, the same as in the prior week, though a four-week moving average picked up for a seventh straight week.

Both of these numbers support the view that the economy will be moderating for the balance of the year, said one analyst.

For the monthly figure due later today, economists expect payrolls to rise 166,000 for September, considerably slower than the 250,000 increase in August. Average hourly earnings and the American unemployment rate are expected to increase marginally.

Tunnel joy tempered by banks

BY JONATHAN PRYNN
TRANSPORT
CORRESPONDENT

EUROTUNNEL faced a double threat to its refinancing plans yesterday as it hinted that trading in its shares, suspended on Monday at 114p, would resume early next week.

Bankers in the 22-strong syndicate of lenders to the company tried to damp down the euphoria generated by news of the breakthrough in the talks with the Channel Tunnel operator, giving warning that the deal could still collapse.

A banking source said that today's meeting of the 26 leading banks in the syndicate would not simply rubber stamp the plans: it would only take one bank to object for the deal to be in difficulty. However, everyone was "very optimistic".

In a separate development, the head of a Eurotunnel shareholders association in France attempted to block the deal in a Paris commercial court.

Stock Exchange unveils reforms

BY ROBERT MILLER

THE London Stock Exchange unveiled plans yesterday to introduce the most radical changes since Big Bang to the way in which shares in the top 100 companies are traded.

Officials at the Stock Exchange, at the publication of the operational and regulatory framework document for the introduction of automated order-driven trading for FT-SE 100 stocks, said the new system would benefit both institutional and retail investors.

Gavin Casey, chief executive of the Stock Exchange, said the new trading system should be ready by the end of next year and could lead to lower dealing costs for private investors.

Under the system, investors will place orders through Stock Exchange member firms, such as stockbrokers. Once these are placed on the universal order book, the buy or sell instructions will be executed at the best possible price. The exchange said the new system would create "a level playing field" for all investors and will not just favour the professional

traders. If institutional investors want to broker much larger deals they will be allowed to do so "off the order book" until the transaction is actually conducted. At that stage, it will automatically be flagged up by the new trading system.

Plans to extend the order-driven trading programme to company shares outside the FT-SE 100 index will be considered, but the primary aim of the new service will be to add liquidity to the London markets, including other exchanges such as those covering futures and options.

London's place in the global and 24-hour electronic trading system will also be enhanced. But the Stock Exchange said that for London truly to capitalise on its position, the 0.5 per cent stamp duty imposed on all share purchases should be abolished. Exchange officials declined to estimate how much business London was losing as a result of the stamp duty.

Share option gains averaging £140,000

BY PHILIP BASSETT
INDUSTRIAL EDITOR

COMPANY directors exercising share options this year are making average gains of £140,000 — with some going as high as £1 million, according to a new analysis today of this key element of boardroom pay packages.

Research from Incomes Data Services, the independent pay analysts, on 151 share option grants exercised in the first three months of this year by 116 directors in 75 companies, shows that

average profits were £139,559, though this figure was pushed up by a small number of very large gains.

Share options — the right to buy shares in the future at a previously fixed price — formed a controversial part of the row over top corporate pay, which led to last year's Greenbury report on boardroom pay packages.

They are being examined again by the inquiry into corporate governance being chaired by Sir Ronald Hampl, chairman of ICI.

In the public's eye, the worst of the share option excesses has been the large profits taken by directors of the privatised utilities. A number of these topped the £1 million mark causing a political outcry. A director at Eurotherm, the electronics manufacturer, made profits representing more than £1 million, as did directors at Thorn EMI and Manchester United.

The lowest profit represented in the quarter was a director of Hilldown Holdings, at just £338.

On average, share prices rose between the granting of options and the

exercise of them by 156 per cent, the study shows. It also suggests that directors are reluctant to hold on to their share options for too long after they mature because of the number of company takeovers and changed tax measures.

In the past, the median length of time that directors held on to their options rose from 49 months in 1991 to 66 months in 1994. But the median is now back down to 48 months, which IDS says is a "sharp break" from recent trends.

Power struggle looms for Grid

BY KEITH RODGERS

THE prospect of National Grid taking its battle with Ofgas, the electricity regulator, to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission loomed large yesterday as the watchdog stuck to its tough stance on transmission price controls.

Professor Stephen Littlechild, the regulator, made only modest changes to the proposals he published earlier this summer, despite coming under fierce attack from the company last month. His proposals mean customers will benefit by almost £1 billion over the next four years, resulting in an annual saving of around £4 on a £300 bill.

National Grid, which has until October 30 to respond to the proposal, refused to comment in detail yesterday. However, analysts argued that there is an even chance that it will seek an MMC inquiry.

Union reaction was also strong, with the Engineers' and Managers' Association arguing that the proposal will result in 800 job losses and that Britain could face blackouts if there is another hurricane.

Under Professor Littlechild's proposal, prices will be cut 20 per cent in the first year, followed by a limit of RPI-X in the next three years. Operating costs will have to fall at least 4 per cent per year, cost of capital is set at 7 per cent and capital expenditure has been raised by £60 million to £775 million.

In the controversial area of asset valuation, Professor Littlechild raised his initial figure by £150 million to £4.15 billion — still far below National Grid's own estimate — after rethinking his assessment of the Grid's telecommunications arm, Energis.

Analysts said earnings per share could fall by 30 per cent as a result of the review, with one suggesting that a sale of Energis is now essential.

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES		
FTSE 100	4000.0	(-15.1)
Yield	3.91%	
FTSE All share	1985.75	(-5.57)
Nikkei	21331.50	(-167.10)
Dow Jones	5921.67	(-12.30)
S&P Composite	682.22	(-1.79)
US RATE		
Federal Funds	5 1/4%	(5 1/4%)
Long Bond	98 1/2%	(98 1/2%)
Yield	6.85%	(6.84%)
LONDON MONEY		
3-month interbank	5 1/4%	(5 1/4%)
12-month bill	100%	(110 1/4)
STERLING		
New York	1.5662	(1.5653)
London	1.5681	(1.5675)
DM	2.3571	(2.3545)
FF	1.1101	(1.1095)
SP	1.5647	(1.5639)
Yen	174.57	(175.17)
£ Index	87.3	(87.3)
DOLLAR		
London	1.5290	(1.5282)
DM	5.1750	(5.1850)
FF	1.2536	(1.2578)
Yen	111.46	(111.88)
\$ Index	87.9	(87.9)
Tokyo close Yen	111.86	
NORTH SEA OIL		
Brent 15-day (Dec)	\$22.95	(\$22.80)
GOLD		
London close	\$379.85	(\$380.60)
* denotes midday trading price		

Removal bill

The North Sea oil industry faces an £8.7 billion bill to remove abandoned oil rigs, an energy consultant reported yesterday. The top three oil companies, Shell, Esso and BP face a combined bill of £3.5 billion. The calculations follow Shell's problems with the Brent Spar platform.

New Labour

Businesses think new Labour is more in touch with its needs although they still lack confidence in its ability to manage the economy. They believe income tax would rise. Page 24

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Managers warmer towards Labour says institute poll

By Philip Bassett, Industrial Editor

THE business community thinks new Labour is more in touch with its needs though it still lacks confidence in Labour's ability to manage the economy and strongly believes income tax would rise under a Labour government, new survey evidence today shows.

Leaders of the Institute of Management, which represents more than 73,000 individual managers and 700 corporate member firms, employing three million people, polled a sample of managers on business attitudes to new Labour in the week of its party conference in Blackpool.

According to the IOM's survey, published today, as many as 81 per cent of the managers polled believe that new Labour is more in touch with business than the old Labour Party, and the Institute says today on the basis of its findings that "key Labour policies are now finding favour with managers".

On specific Labour issues, 59 per cent think Labour is right to propose a windfall tax on the profits of the privatised utilities, while the same number believe a minimum wage set at as much as £4 an hour — higher than any figure a Labour government would be likely to set — would not "significantly" increase their employment costs, though 28 per cent believe it would.

As many as 93 per cent of the sample of 386 managers advocate full involvement in negotiations over a single currency, with the same number maintaining that the UK should be involved in any negotiations on European social chapter proposals — in spite of the Conservative Government's opt-out from it.

But managers remain sceptical about Labour's economic competence, with more than half — 56 per cent — believing that Labour does not have a clear strategy for the UK

economy, and clear majorities saying that a Labour government could not be trusted to control government borrowing, at 60 per cent of those sampled, government spending, at 61 per cent, and to keep inflation low and under control, at 63 per cent.

Britain's managers are also making clear their concern about how a future Labour government might affect their own incomes and taxes, with as many as 78 per cent saying that they believe an increase in income tax would be more likely under Labour, and three fifths believing they personally would be worse off with a Labour government.

The IOM plans to conduct a similar poll during next week's Conservative Party conference in Bournemouth, which Institute leaders believe will offer the opportunity for a direct comparison of the current state of business opinion on the main political parties.



Tony Blair's policies are finding favour with business

Rank talks over Hard Rock plan

By Richard Thomson

RANK ORGANISATION has confirmed that it is holding talks with Donald Trump, the US property developer, to convert an Atlantic City casino into the trappings of the famous Hard Rock Café.

The deal would require Rank to "retheme" the entire Trump Castle casino and hotel and install a Hard Rock Café inside. It would take 100 per cent of the revenues from the café and Mr Trump would continue to take the revenues generated by the casino and hotel.

Jim Berk, chief executive of the restaurant company, said: "This is an opportunity for creating a niche in a City that does not get much of the 21 to 40-year-old age group. Right now we're not taking a stake in the casino. We do not have a gambling licence or the management expertise to handle casinos."

Hard Rock is already installing a restaurant inside Mr Trump's Taj Mahal casino, also in Atlantic City, which is due to open in November. The aim is to attract a younger clientele to the gambling tables to counter growing competition.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Deutsche Bank risks strike over sick pay

DEUTSCHE BANK, Germany's largest commercial bank, yesterday came under threat of industrial action after deciding to adopt a tougher sick-pay regime for its 40,000 German employees. The bank's move is based on new legislation introduced in Germany last Tuesday, which cuts salary payments to sick workers to 80 per cent of gross wages, from 100 per cent.

Germany's banking unions have warned financial institutions that they will take strike action if sick pay is cut. The legislation has already caused labour unrest in the car industry. Commerzbank, Deutsche Bank's rival, has said that it will implement the new sick-pay laws.

Martin on course

MARTIN International, which supplies clothes to Marks & Spencer, lifted its UK sales 22 per cent in the six months to June 30, after last year's management shake-up and extra productivity put it on course to return to profitability by the year end. Sales were £41.8 million (£33.8 million) at the halfway stage, while losses were £453,000 before tax (£1.34 million loss). Michael Kidd, chairman, said he was confident of much stronger progress in the second half. The dividend stays at 0.45p, to be paid on January 2.

Millennium shares rise

SHARES of Millennium Chemicals, the former Hanson company which joined the New York Stock Exchange on Wednesday, recovered from their post-listing flop yesterday, as demand from US investors began to outpace the influx of shares from the UK. After opening at \$23 on Tuesday, the shares fell to \$21½ on Wednesday, but hit a high of \$23½ by early afternoon. Traders said that UK shareholders were still selling in bulk, mostly through reluctance to hold on to a US equity.

Publishing 'buoyant'

PUBLISHERS from most countries at the world's biggest book fair yesterday described business as buoyant. The glaring exception was the US, where, said Alberto Vitale, chairman of Random House, "business is flat as a board". Frankfurt has drawn more than 9,200 publishers from 110 countries to its 1996 fair. About 80 per cent of all global rights are concluded there. Susan Blackwell, of the Australian Publishers Association, said: "Paper prices have stabilised. The chaos of last year is a thing of the past."

European sales lift BWI

RESURGENCE in European markets helped BWI, the packaging and process machinery producer, to overcome shrinking sales at home, reporting pre-tax profits of £8.32 million (£7.1 million) in the year to July 31. Recovering demand for capital equipment lifted sales from continental Europe by 21 per cent, to £23.4 million, but the company gave warning that this growth had slowed. Overall, sales grew from £90.4 million to £97 million. An unchanged final dividend of 4.3p, payable January 3, makes the total 7.3p.

Warning on Jaguar

DEMAND in the US for the Jaguar XK8, the new model on which much of the British luxury car manufacturer's fortunes depend, is likely to be weak, experts said as the company begins filling showrooms with the car this week. The US, the key market for Jaguar — owned by Ford — taking most of its annual output. "Sports cars are a dying, shrinking market," said Peter Schmidt of Automotive Industry Data. One US dealer is offering titanium painted XK8s for \$74,974.

Irish credit growth up

THE IRISH REPUBLIC'S Central Bank will be forced to continue its tightrope act, trying to restrain private sector credit growth while maintaining the punt's value, after the adjusted annual rate of growth of private sector credit rose to 14.3 per cent in August, from 13.8 per cent in July. The annual rate of growth in residential mortgage lending climbed to 16.3 per cent, from 16.1 per cent. At the start of the year, the Central Bank said it wanted both figures at about 10 per cent. It fears medium-term inflationary pressures.

US insurer reveals \$20m fraud

By Robert Miller

PRUDENTIAL Securities of America, the world's largest insurer which looks after \$271 billion, has confirmed that an employee in its Tokyo securities office had embezzled \$20 million from clients.

The losses, which involved the misappropriation of stock certificates and cash by a Japanese employee, were discovered in June last year after an internal audit, the Prudential's head office in New York said yesterday.

The unnamed assistant, who had already left Prudential Securities (Japan) when the firm sold its membership of the Tokyo Stock Exchange in November 1994, confessed that the certificates had been misappropriated over a two-year period between 1993 and 1995. The cash was embezzled on a single day.

A spokeswoman for the Prudential said: "The losses were covered by insurance and all clients have been reimbursed in full." She believed the matter was now in the hands of the Tokyo metropolitan police.

Pennington, page 25

CBI caution on strength of sterling

By Janet Bush

THE Confederation of British Industry said yesterday that it is too early to tell whether sterling's strength is hurting British exporters.

The pound leapt above the DM2.40 mark yesterday for the first time since early 1995, before settling back to around DM2.3970 in late trading. Sudhir Junankar, the CBI's associate director of economic analysis, said that he had not picked up any worsening in the situation for exporters so far but that the next industrial trends survey this month should give some insight into whether companies are concerned.

The pound's recent strength has been based on a variety of factors. It has profited from a positive view of the British economy, which has low inflation and accelerating growth as well as dollar strength. But another major factor has been the expectation that Labour will win the election and is more likely than the Conservative Party to take the pound into a single currency.

Optimism grows, page 25

TOURIST RATES

	Bank Buys	Bank Sells	Bank Buys	Bank Sells
Australia \$	2.07	1.91	Malta	0.607
Austria Sch	13.76	12.25	Netherlands Gld	2.209
Belgium Fr	36.36	33.33	New Zealand \$	2.38
Canada \$	2.236	2.078	Norway Kr	8.173
Cyprus Cyp	0.785	0.710	Portugal Esc	203.50
Denmark Kr	9.16	8.05	Spain Ptas	166.64
Finland Mk	7.70	7.05	S. Africa Rd	207.50
France Fr	6.55	5.91	Sweden Kr	10.39
Germany Dm	2.36	2.14	Switzerland Fr	2.10
Greece Dr	363	368	Turkey Lira	147000
Hong Kong \$	12.74	11.74	USA \$	1.663
Iceland Iskr	115	96		
Ireland P	1.08	0.95		
Israel Sh	5.08	4.70		
Italy Lira	2489	2534		
Japan Yen	196.90	172.90		

Rates for small denomination bank notes from Sterling Bank. Other rates apply to transfer's cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

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British Gas plumps for the MMC Reuters riles the Revenue Heading towards an order-driven market

Sid's cry for help

MOST boards dread a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. For British Gas, it is a corporate cry for help. Management is stretched to breaking point by government intervention, by regulatory attack, by staff cuts, by accelerated changes in computer systems, by mounting losses on take-or-pay gas contracts, by the demerger recommended by the MMC last time, by proposed new structural changes, by the threat of a Labour levy and by the headlong fall of its stock market value — among other things.

Conservative meeting in Blackpool next week might recall that, ahead of the 1992 election, they were proud of the privatised gas industry, whether or not they were among its 1.7 million shareholders. They should ask why this great enterprise now looks at risk of collapsing.

Much of the blame rests with government. Along with Ofgas, it rejected the 1993 MMC study, which recommended that full competition in the domestic market be left until 2000-2003 and be brought in with care. Instead it is being accelerated to 1998.

Ofgas's ludicrous price proposals for Transco, the core pipeline distribution business, bear little relation to conventional utility regulation. On British Gas forecasts, they would cut Transco's after-tax cash flow

by an average of £400 million a year from the present £721 million. Ofgas calculations were themselves dire. They implied that British Gas would have to slash its dividend, even if it met Ofgas cost targets.

The price cuts were needed to ensure that small domestic customers do not have to pay more under the new regime. So they assume that operating costs will fall faster, rather than rising in the short-term to cope with extra complexity.

Ofgas has had to do some fancy conceptual footwork, arbitrarily cutting the allowed value of Transco assets and the depreciation Transco is allowed to charge its customers. That helps explain why British Gas should appeal to such a stern regulator-friendly body as the MMC. If the MMC rejects the appeal and says Ofgas is right on asset value and depreciation, it will also have to say it was itself wrong on these matters in 1993.

If the MMC's Graeme Odgers is brave, he will ask some tough questions about the purpose of regulation. Most people thought it was act as a proxy for competition:

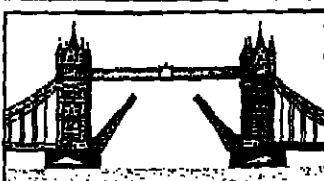
to protect customers from profiteering and to give an incentive to efficiency. Ofgas is now proxy for a monopoly buyer, aiming to contract out services at the lowest feasible price.

As the 9.5 per cent yield on British Gas shares shows, this view is short-term. Credit ratings are falling and the cost of capital rising sharply. In the long run, consumers will have to pay. Ofgas thinks Transco is virtually risk-free. Investors in Transco International, main successor to British Gas, should therefore insist that their risk capital is withdrawn as fast as possible in dividends and replaced with debt.

Funds' loophole faces closure

THE big pension funds have been supping so well and for so long at this particular Last Chance Saloon that someone had to call time eventually. That clever £613 million Reuters hand-out seems to have proved the last straw for the Inland Revenue, never an admirer of the tax laws surrounding share buybacks

PENNINGTON



and special dividends and the rewards they offer such funds.

Readers who are not well up on tax law may not appreciate that every time a company with too much cash decides to hand some back to shareholders, the public exchequer has to make a contribution too. As the law stands, when the company puts up the money, those shareholders who do not pay tax, and these include the big pension funds, can claim back the 20 per cent advance corporation tax already paid by the company itself.

So a sum equivalent to anything up to a fifth of the amount being handed out may be paid to those pension funds in addition by the public purse. The wrinkle was used by several of those

overseas companies who were buying British utilities a year ago to raise the value of their bids. As a result taxpayers, that is, you and me, may have helped a non-British taxpayer to pay for the purchase of our local electricity company, which is nice work if you can get it.

So far this year investors have received more than £7 billion from special dividends and buybacks, which is an awful lot of lost tax. The Revenue loathes this, naturally. Reuters's special dividend was such an innovative and complex beast because an earlier share buyback could not be repeated since the tax authorities refused to give it advance clearance. There was no guarantee this new scheme would not fall foul of the tax laws either, even if a couple of barristers had given their expensive opinion that it would not.

Whatever decision the Revenue comes to, the whole loophole could well be closed in next month's Budget. The City pension funds will hate this, but their share of public sympathy is limited. What is so curious is that the Labour Party, in all its

ranting about fat cats and corporate greed, should not have latched on to this one before the Chancellor did.

SE compromise for all seasons

DID Michael Lawrence fall on his sword in vain? The former Stock Exchange chief executive was fired at the start of the year for a number of reasons, but one had to do with the implacable opposition of the old guard, those market-makers who now dominate the City, to his plans for order-driven trading.

Now the Stock Exchange has produced a document that appears neatly to reconcile the interests of the consumer, the active investor, with those market-makers. Such a compromise, his detractors say, might have been more difficult had the abrasive Mr Lawrence still been in charge. Whatever. The technicalities need not concern us, but as from some time late next year an electronic bulletin board, or order book, will log all reasonably sized trades of FT-SE

100 companies that dealers want to make. This would largely, but not entirely, replace the present system of matched bargains conducted in private between consenting parties.

There is every possibility this will be extended further, to take in the next 150 stocks by size, for example. It will mean the price of such stocks will be much clearer, narrowing the spread between buy and sell. Retail investors will be largely unaffected unless they are dealing in size. But market-makers will still be able to trade off-market, using their own capital and taking sizeable positions in the market — and risks. Such deals will be logged on the order book in an as yet undefined way to allow them some privacy.

Payoff line

THE news from Japan will lift the spirits of every downtrodden City worker worried about being downsized. An employee of Prudential Securities of the US reacted to being fired during cut-backs in Tokyo by embezzling \$20 million — it sounds even better in yen, ¥2.2 billion — in cash and shares. There is no suggestion the money was paid back, and the whole thing was covered by insurance anyway. The broker only admitted the loss when it all came out in the financial press.

Benchmark lands £113m London property portfolio

By CARL MORTISHED

BENCHMARK GROUP, a shell property company with a market worth of only £3 million, is to be transformed into a business worth £100 million investing in real estate in the West End.

The company, whose shares were suspended yesterday, is acquiring London Capital Holdings, a portfolio of 14 central London properties, from Friends Provident for £113 million. The deal is being put together with the support of Hong Leong, a Malaysian conglomerate which is a leading shareholder in Benchmark.

The purchase of London Capital is a coup for Nigel Kempner, managing director of Benchmark, who is the former head of Randworth Trust, which originally put together the London Capital portfolio. The deal brings back under his control major West End properties such as the

Derry and Toms building on Kensington High Street, as well as properties on Sackville Street and Sloane Street. Mr Kempner sold Randworth Trust to an American investment group led by JMB Realty for £250 million at the top of the property boom in 1989. The company later collapsed with heavy debts. The London Capital portfolio was taken over by Citibank and subsequently sold on to Friends Provident.

Mr Kempner said he had joined forces with the Hong Leong group to create a substantial central London property group with the objective of creating a portfolio worth £500 million within five years.

The properties generate rents of £8.9 million and include a retail and office development opportunity at Bishopsgate in the City. Mr Kempner said the rental income would improve on the

letting of vacant space. The refinancing will leave Benchmark 39 per cent geared, but the company intends to gear up with further acquisitions.

The purchase is being financed with the issue of 41 million new shares to Friends Provident at 160p after a capital reorganisation. In turn, the insurer is selling on 20 million shares at the same price to First Capital Corporation, a company in which Hong Leong has an interest. A further £25.9 million of the purchase price is being raised in a placing and open offer of 17 million shares, also at 160p.

After the deal, the company will be 35 per cent controlled by Friends Provident and 35 per cent controlled by companies related to Hong Leong Group. David Newbigging, deputy chairman of Friends Provident, is joining the Benchmark board, while Quok Leng Chan, head of Hong Leong, remains as chairman.

Reuters payout plan still lacks Revenue approval

REUTERS, the financial information company, is pressing ahead with plans to return £613 million to shareholders despite not having received clearance from the Inland Revenue for British shareholders (George Sivell writes). Yesterday, Reuters said that shareholders need to check their own

tax position. The creation of the special dividend shares is subject to shareholder approval at a special meeting next Wednesday. If approved, the shares will start trading on October 10. The Inland Revenue said yesterday that special dividends were "an area under close consideration".

The company sought advice from two leading counsels on tax matters before announcing its plans. Reuters plans to pay £613 million back to shareholders over three years by creating special dividend shares. Each share would pay net dividends totalling 750p over the three years.

Shareholders are to be offered one new special dividend share and 19 new ordinary shares for each 20 ordinary shares held. When the scheme was announced, Reuters shares were at 750p; yesterday they rose 2½p to 756p.

Pennington, page 25

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Hamleys new head quits early

By KEITH ROGERS

GEOFF CULLINAN, who was brought in as chief executive of Hamleys, the toy group, to spearhead its strategic development, has quit after seven months in the job.

The announcement came as Hamleys unveiled an 18 per cent increase in pre-tax profits to £2 million for the six months to July 27, on turnover up 4 per cent to £11.4 million. Earnings per share increased by 12 per cent to 5.7p, while the interim dividend, due in the second half of November, rose from 2.7p to 3p per share.

Mr Cullinan is leaving "to pursue his other business interests". He joined Hamleys after a lengthy career in consultancy. Howard Dyer, chairman, said: "It wasn't quite right for him or for us. He was a consultant — I think we need a retailer."

The group has expanded this year, opening a shop at Singapore Airport last month and granting Saudi Arabian franchises.

Mr Dyer said the company has a growing cash balance of £6.1 million and would consider a share buyback or special dividend in 18 months if it had not invested elsewhere.



Howard Dyer says Hamleys needs a retailer as chief executive

Inspirations warning costly

By MARIANNE CURPHEY

A PROFIT warning by Inspirations, the tour operator, wiped more than a third off the value of its shares yesterday, sending them falling 47½p to a low of 86½p.

The company said it had been hit by "substantial one-off costs" relating to its airline subsidiary, Caledonian Airways, and would break even in the year to September 30. The summer season for holiday companies has been far better than expected and the City had anticipated a £7.7 million year-end profit. The company said the problem related to its aircraft maintenance schedule but was unable to say exactly what the final cost would be.

Inspirations bought Caledonian from British

Airways in 1994. Inspirations claims it was forced to lease other aircraft over the peak summer season because its engineering contractor failed to service the fleet on time. The company added that it planned to offer a final dividend of 2.72p a share, making a total for the year of 3.5p, unchanged from the previous year.

Inspirations's larger tour operating rivals, AirTours and First Choice, have not been affected by such problems. Both have cut capacity after a disastrous summer season last year. Wayne Sanderson, leisure analyst with Merrill Lynch, said AirTours had avoided having to introduce heavy discounting at the end of the season to shift unsold holidays.

THE TIMES CITY DIARY

Taxing times for Barclays

A DIRECTOR at Barclays Bank will appear at an industrial tribunal next week, to appeal against dismissal. Michael Kerridge, who is a director of Barclays property subsidiaries, was forced to leave his post as deputy tax director in November last year, after he was accused of "misconduct" and "incompetence" at work.

Mr Kerridge, who is represented by Fox Williams, the City law firm, joined Barclays on December 31, 1990 to set up its property tax function at Westward Business Park in Coventry. Before that he was an accountant at Coopers & Lybrand. The allegations directed at Mr Kerridge, who is in his mid-forties, are said to be about "the right way of handling tax issues".

Esprit de core

IN THE wake of Archie Norman, the new chief executive of Asda is making his mark with apples. Alison Leighton is leading the supermarket chain in its battle against EU regulations that make it illegal to sell apples less than 55mm in diameter. In defence of the small but perfectly rounded Cox, Leighton has ordered £11,000 worth of apples, that's 29,400lb, to be given away this Saturday to hungry children who visit any of Asda's 200 stores. Better than an uncured cucumber.

Board switch

THEY are changing jobs at Town and Country, the Ipswich insurance company, where Theodore Agnew, the corduroy-clad managing director, is taking over the switchboard for the day. In a bid to improve customer relations, Agnew and Richard Mehmed, one of the directors, will be answering calls, while the lady norman, on the switchboard, heads off to discuss strategy in sales and marketing. Agnew's seat will remain vacant in his absence, however, as there is no one quite of his weight to take over at the helm.



CITY slickers wondering what to spend their Christmas bonuses on could take a look at Harrods's seasonal catalogue. Undoubtedly, their eyes will alight upon the exquisite hand-embroidered tablecloths on offer. In fine white organza, bordered with pure linen, the tablecloths come in Swatow embroidery from the Kwangtung region of China — a procedure that takes two years. No wonder then that the 12-seater tablecloths are priced at £12,000 each.

Brief talk

SERIOUS Fraud Office beware, it looks like those hotshot lawyers acting on behalf of Peter "Gherkins" Young have something exciting up their sleeves. Monty Raphael, a senior partner at Peters & Peters, who also represented Robert Miller of Dundee fame, is speaking at a conference at the Unit for the Study of White Collar Crime — part of the Liverpool Business School. Mr Raphael's chosen topic is "Compliance and how it can assist in successful criminal prosecution".

MORAG PRESTON

Club Med should remain a holiday destination

Germans are not keen on allowing Italy and Spain to join EMU

Can they be serious? Do Italy and Spain really expect to become founder members of the single currency zone? To judge by the manic behaviour of world financial markets, there is no longer the shadow of a doubt. I reported in this column two weeks ago that EMU was now a "done deal" for Germany, France and the other German-dominated "core" countries of northern Europe. But it never occurred to me that the momentum of European integration was such that it would only take ten days for Spain, Italy and Portugal to graduate to this same Teutonic core. That, however, is what financial markets seem to believe.

Italian bonds have jumped by eight full points in the past three weeks, with almost half this movement occurring in the past five days, on the sudden certainty that Italy will be in the first wave of countries to join the European monetary union. To put that in perspective, the entire annual movement of the US bond market last year. Spanish bonds have moved even faster than Italy's.

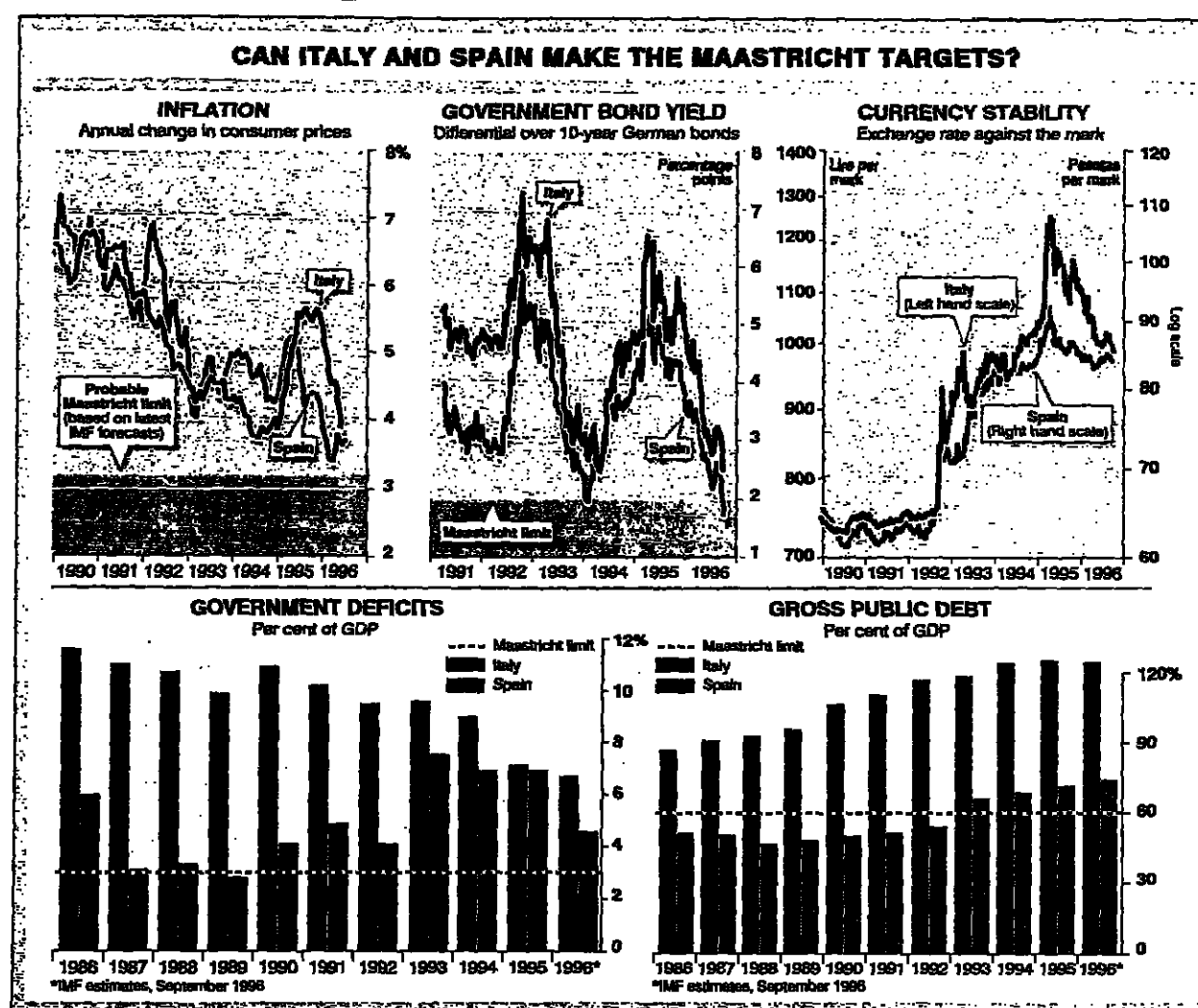
The question now is whether this sudden confidence about EMU will be followed by an equally spectacular collapse, perhaps even comparable to the explosion of the exchange-rate mechanism in September 1992, an event which was also triggered in Italy and Spain.

Such a market debacle seems possible — though not yet by any means likely — because a huge gap seems to have opened between market perceptions and political and economic realities. Many investors seem suddenly to believe that the Club Med countries (as Italy and Spain are affectionately known in the markets) can seriously expect to be admitted in the first round of EMU.

Yet political and economic realities say that this is well nigh impossible — certainly in the case of Italy. I say this as someone who has believed throughout the past four years that the political and economic prospects for Italy are far better than most investors realised. There is no doubt that Italy is one of Europe's strongest economies — with better long-term fundamentals than Germany, and perhaps even Britain or France. It is almost equally certain that Italy will move back gradually to financial solvency and that Italian interest rates will continue to fall, easing the burden of servicing its enormous public debt. It is possible that the new electoral system will lead to a period of political stability and honest government. But none of this will qualify it for EMU under the Maastricht process.

What the markets seem to have forgotten is that EMU is not just a rational economic arrangement, designed to maximise the welfare of all Europeans. It is a Byzantine strategic power game, marked by a constant rebalancing of politics and economics, reality and deception, solidarity and betrayal. For Italy, all these considerations point to exclusion from EMU, at least in the first round.

The first and most important reason why Italy must be excluded from the first wave of EMU is German electoral politics. Helmut Kohl will face re-election in late 1998, about six months after the decision on which countries will join EMU. If he admits Italy, he will risk losing the election.



our costs; this means their industries can tolerate much higher levels of wage inflation than Germany's and still remain internationally competitive. With Italy, Spain and Portugal in the club, the traditionally inflationary soft-currency nations will match the hard-currency core in terms of sheer numbers: Italy, Spain and Portugal have 106 million people between them, against the 104 million who live in Germany, Austria, The Netherlands and Luxembourg. This will leave the political balance of power with Belgium and France.

Of course, EMU is not a democratic arrangement, but the weight of numbers will still matter in guiding the balance of policies set by the European Central Bank. The composition of the ECB board gives the Germans even more reason for concern. Not many Germans are yet aware of this, but one of the huge concessions Herr Kohl made in the Maastricht negotiations was his agreement that the ECB would set its policies on the basis of one-country, one-vote. Germany, in other words, will have no more votes on the ECB council than Italy, Spain or even Belgium. Under this voting structure, Germany could have real difficulty dominating an ECB council that included several members of the Club Med.

For these and other reasons, Herr Kohl would certainly prefer to keep the Club Med out of the first round of EMU in 1999. This initial rejection would in no way preclude Italy, Spain and even Greece from being let in a year or two later — probably on easier terms than the ones set out at Maastricht — once the German public has got over its loss of the mark and EMU has become irreversible.

"But," says your friendly Club Med bond salesman, "Kohl can't just keep Italy out if it meets the Maastricht targets. That is why last week's budget was so momentous. The Italian Government is now committed to getting its deficit down to 3 per cent of GDP come hell or high water — and if necessary it can use the accounting fiddles pioneered by France."

This is nonsense. Maastricht lays down five separate convergence criteria — and the 3 per cent deficit requirement is by no means the most important. Germany and France will have huge latitude in balancing these five criteria to include or exclude whichever countries they wish. But even if the decisions on membership were made with absolute fairness, it is hard to see how Italy should get in.

Probably the most important convergence criteria from an economic standpoint are the ones on inflation and long-term interest rates: average inflation in the 12 months before the decisions on membership are made must be within 1.5 percentage points of the average of the three countries with the lowest inflation in Europe; and long-term bond yields must be within two points of yields in these same countries. These two criteria are very clearly specified in the treaty and are therefore vulnerable to judicial challenge if they are breached. At present, Italy fails on all five of the Maastricht criteria — and by a wide margin. Even if it manages next year to get its deficit below 3 per cent (a very big if), it will still have double the debt level allowed in the treaty and will not have been a

member of the ERM for two years, as required. Whether it can get its inflation below 3 per cent without artificial price restraints, which will in turn boost budget deficits, is open to question.

And what of long-term interest rates? These are exquisitely sensitive to financial expectations and nods and winks from politicians and central bankers. In the next few weeks it will be interesting to see whether German policymakers, through their actions and comments, try to help Italy to keep its long-term rates moving towards the German level — or decide to feed market anxieties about convergence which could immediately scupper Italy's membership hopes.

The question for Italy today is not simply whether it can somehow shoe-horn its deficit below the 3 per cent limit. It is whether this immense political effort will prove in vain — simply because the Germans think of Club Med as a holiday destination, not a currency arrangement.

Letters to the Business and Finance section of The Times can be sent by fax to 0171-782 5112.

Tunnel vision decisive in Channel battle

End to golden era of ferry companies was inevitable, says Jonathan Prynn

So who won, the ferry companies or Eurotunnel? Eventually, and perhaps inevitably, it was Lord Sterling who blinked first. Once it became clear that, whatever its financial problems, the Channel tunnel would never actually close, the old order at Dover and Calais was doomed.

For all the ferry companies' protestations that passengers would not abandon the joys of the briny for a 30-minute trip "in a box, in a box", as one Stena executive memorably described Le Shuttle, the punters disagreed.

Within a year of opening the tunnel, Eurotunnel had grabbed 40 per cent of the ferry companies' once lucrative market. Once the early technical problems with the trains were sorted out, holidaymakers decided that they liked the speed and convenience of the shuttle service. The blatant bribe of a two-thirds reduction on duty-free goods at the tunnel terminals probably helped, too.

To be fair, the ferry industry scored some spectacular gains. When Stena was last year unable to agree terms for a renewal of its pooling arrangement with its French partner, SNAT, the result was a new player on the scene at the worst possible time.

SNAT, a French government-subsidised subsidiary of the state rail company, promptly changed its name to Sea France, added new ships to the route and perhaps sealed the fate of the industry.

Other external factors outside even Lord Sterling's ability to control added to the unfolding financial disaster. The strength of the French franc deterred many holidaymakers in the Spring, while a stormy winter graphically underlined one of Le Shuttle's key competitive advantages over its sea-bound rivals.

At P&O, already under severe City pressure because of a decade of share price underperformance, the inevitability of what was happening finally dawned on the company.

The ferry operations plunged from £120 million profit a year in 1994 to barely breakeven in the first half of

this year, and the prospect of losses loomed.

It is difficult not to feel at least a twinge of sympathy for P&O. Of its main competitors, Eurotunnel was virtually unsinkable, however desperate its financial plight. Two others, Brittany Ferries and Sea France, were state subsidised; and another, Stena, had the deep pockets of a private Swedish company behind it.

This summer, as the insane price war between Eurotunnel and the ferry companies reached its peak, Lord Sterling was already putting out feelers to the rest of the industry about a massive rationalisation. Once Ian Lang agreed in July to lift the restrictions on ferry company mergers, the entire industry was "in play".

Although the Stena high command initially resisted the overtures from P&O, at a lower level "talks about talks" have been underway since last November. Lord Sterling was desperate to have a deal in place well before Christmas so a new and sustainable fare and cost structure could be ready in time for next season's brochures.

Yesterday, the day after Eurotunnel announced that it had also secured its future through a massive debt refinancing, the ferry merger was unveiled to the world.

For the holidaymaker, the announcement marks the end of a golden era of the cross-Channel ferry, the likes of which will not be seen again for decades. This summer it was easier and cheaper to cross the Channel than at any time since England was joined to France. Next summer, prices are certain to bounce back, although it may take further rationalisation to again make running a ferry company an acceptably profitable business.

So it was a good week for Sir Alastair Morton. On Wednesday he announced a settlement with one foe — the banks — and on Thursday his other enemy, the ferry operators, sue for terms. Sir Alastair can retire with dignity to the Lords, perhaps to share a bench with Baron Sterling, confident of a job completed. However, it is unlikely that the ferry workers of Dover and Folkestone will ever thank him for it.

Stormy winter underlined one of Le Shuttle's key advantages



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Boiling mad after having tried in vain to get through on the service hotline

From Mrs B. A. Ford

Sir, The Managing Director of British Gas is economical with the truth in his letter published in your Business and Finance Section on 26 September.

Yes, calls to his Area Service Centre are answered — but by a recorded announcement which requests the caller to hold — and then cuts off. It has done this to me for a fortnight.

My central heating boiler has broken down. It is subject of a three-star service contract with British Gas, under which I pay a large

sum of money and British Gas guarantees a 24-hour response.

I have been telephoning British Gas at their area service number, to ask them to honour their contract, since 12 September.

Their machine answers my call, invites me to press a series of buttons on my handset, and then cuts my call off, every time. It is impossible to speak to a human being.

The British Telecom operators, whose help I enlisted on 12 September, told me British Gas had been cutting off calls from other customers for at least two weeks. British Gas

was still cutting off my calls on 27 September, the day after the Managing Director's letter to you was published. I must have made fifty calls. There has been no response whatsoever.

We have finally cracked. We found a private plumber who answered his telephone and yesterday repaired our boiler. It is galling to have had to pay him, considering that we have already paid British Gas for the same service.

I suggest Mr Wood should explain why, if his system has not collapsed, none of my calls have elicited any response for a whole fortnight, and why the

recorded message on the service number was not altered to reflect the true situation. I invite him to reimburse me for the cost of all those calls and the cost of the private plumber who did British Gas work for them.

Needless to say, when our three-star service contract expires next month we will not be renewing. It doesn't seem to be much use to us.

Yours faithfully,
B. A. FORD,
Glenhorne,
23 Mareschal Road,
Guildford,
Surrey.

The accounting chaos at British Gas does not pay me to be a good payer

From F. Paul Taylor

Sir, Good payers (The Times, September 27) are not only being irritated by the chaos in the accounts department of British Gas, they are being penalised.

Because of numerous bank errors, we refuse to pay by direct debit and have opted to

use the Option Pay arrangements whereby if we pay within ten days of the meter reading date we receive a small discount of £2.

Last quarter we received our bill on a Saturday morning nine days after the meter reading and had to chase off to the Post Office to meet the

deadline. This quarter we have just received our account 11 days after the meter reading, making it impossible to meet the deadline for rebate.

Is this a hidden way of boosting profits? Or the fat cat salaries of the management? Privatisation of British Gas has been a disaster.

Yours faithfully
F. PAUL TAYLOR,
7 Kingsway,
Frodsham,
Cheshire.

